Wisconsin Plays

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WISCONSIN PLAYS

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WISCONSIN PLAYS

THOMAS H. DICKINSON :: :. :: *Editor*

Original one-act plays from the repertory of
THE WISCONSIN DRAMATIC SOCIETY

ZONA GALE
THOMAS H. DICKINSON
WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

NEW YORK
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The authors unite in dedicating this book of
Wisconsin Plays to

LAURA CASE SHERRY

who as director, player, and writer has
been a large factor in the life of
The Wisconsin Dramatic Society

FOREWORD

The Wisconsin Plays were written under the influence of a local movement in behalf of a better dramatic art in which the Wisconsin Dramatic Society has been an active agency. The majority of the plays in the series belong to the repertory of the Society and have been presented in regular performances in Madison and Milwaukee, and on tour in other places in the Middle West. The authors of these plays disclaim any desire whatever to inaugurate a new order of playwriting. Their chief purpose, aside from the personal motive that impels every work of art, has been to provide for the section in which they live the impulse of the practice of an art as a corrective of standards, as distinguished from the principle of a referendum of standards to the people. In a strict sense it has been the ideal of the Wisconsin Dramatic Society to be a free-stage society, free, that is, in the sense of freedom from commercial necessities, from professional trammels, even from a too insistent social

purpose; in other words, free to experiment with a rapidly changing art and to trace out in practice its growing social implications. The plays which make up this series constitute one factor of an experimental programme, which has been directed to the cultivation of a better dramatic art, by means of the training of actors, and the encouragement of the study, criticism, and writing of plays.

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THE NEIGHBOURS

By Zona Gale

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

GRANDMA
MIS' DIANTHA ABEL
EZRA WILLIAMS
PETER
INEZ
MIS' ELMIRA MORAN
MIS' TROT
MIS' CARRY ELLSWORTH

THE NEIGHBOURS

A kitchen. At the right an ironing-board, with full clothes-basket on the floor. At the back an open door, an open window with blooming plants on its outside sill, and a wide cupboard with a figured calico curtain before it. At the left an exit into a shed. A wooden bottomed rocker with high back and calico cushion, some wooden bottomed straight chairs, a table covered with a red cloth and ranged with four or five lamps, and at the corner farthest from the ironing-board, clothes-bars spread with a few freshly-ironed pieces.

By the window, left back, sits GRANDMA *who does not leave her chair throughout the play until its end. She is very old. She is in bright-coloured calico, with ribbons on her black cap. She is cutting and winding white and black carpet rags, and a basket of the balls is beside her on the floor.*

MIS' DIANTHA ABEL *is ironing at the board. She has on a blue calico gown, a long gingham*

apron, spectacles, and a black hat trimmed with faded flowers and a dilapidated ostrich feather. She irons slowly, as anybody would iron, tests her flat-iron, starts for the shed to renew it at the stove out there.

GRANDMA

[*Looking up.*] Seems to me Inez is a terrible long time gettin' that starch.

MIS' ABEL

I wish she'd hurry herself back. I ain't got enough starch to do the collars.

GRANDMA

I'll cold-starch 'em for you, if you want.

MIS' ABEL

No, Grandma, you jest set still and take care o' yourself. Don't you go botherin' about other folks's work.

GRANDMA

I'm terrible tired cutting up carpet rags. [MIS' ABEL *disappears in the shed.* GRANDMA, *sorting her rags, talks on, raising her voice to follow* MIS' ABEL.] 'Tain't as though they was goin' to be rugs. We got rag rugs all over the

house now. So has everybody else we know. Everybody's floors is plastered with 'em. I been cuttin' rags ever since I came an' doin' nothin' . . . [MIS' ABEL *returns with her fresh iron, testing it as she comes*] . . . *but* cuttin' rags. Seems like I'd ought to be able to make somethin' else with my fingers. Somethin' human. Where you goin', Dianthy?

MIS' ABEL

I'm a-goin' to get this ironin' out of the way, short off. That is, I am if Inez ever gets back from Mis' Ellsworth's with that cup o' starch.

GRANDMA

What you got your hat on for?

MIS' ABEL

So's if anybody runs in they won't set half the day, henderin' me. They'll think I'm goin' off.

GRANDMA

I know. The neighbours do hender terrible. [*A pause.*] Sometimes, though, I think it must be kind o' nice to have somethin' to be hendered *at*.

MIS' ABEL

[*Ironing—but not fast.*] I always say mornin's is wove and cut out for hard work. I don't want Mis' Moran or somebody comin' in an' settin' the whole forenoon. This ironin's got to be got out of the way this mornin', no matter what happens to who.

[*Her iron sticks, and she rubs it vigorously on the carpet.*

GRANDMA

[*Who has dropped her work and is reaching to pick dead leaves off the plants in the window.*] I don't seem to have no go in me no more. I don't know what's come over me. I ain't no more interested in them carpet rags than I am in the dipthery.

[EZRA WILLIAMS *appears at the open window. He is large and flushed and furious.*

EZRA

Mis' Abel! *Mis' Abel!*

MIS' ABEL

[*Looks at him, then turns and goes on ironing.*] Well, Ezra, as a family, we ain't deef.

EZRA

Is this you folks's wood out here?

MIS' ABEL

[*Over shoulder.*] Wood?

EZRA

I want to know if you folks ordered any cord wood?

MIS' ABEL

No. We didn't order no wood.

EZRA

Well, they've brought you some. Only they've unpiled it in front of my door on the piece that's new-seeded and that I've tended like a baby.

MIS' ABEL

Ezra, you're that reasonable that I s'pose it's reasonin' that keeps you so calm. That wood never heard of us.

EZRA

You sure?

MIS' ABEL

Not as sure as you are about things. You don't often find folks as sure as that. But—sure.

EZRA

Well, it's somebody's fool wood, an' I've got to go an' find the fool that ordered it up— [*He strides off, still talking.*] Whoever heard o' anybody gettin' cord wood in, anyhow, in the middle o' the summer?

[GRANDMA, *who has stopped picking off dead leaves and has listened attentively during his stay, looks after him till he disappears; then she turns.*

GRANDMA

What did he say?

MIS' ABEL

Did he talk too soft for you, Grandma?

GRANDMA

He was so mad I couldn't keep my mind on what he *was* saying.

MIS' ABEL

Oh, well, he was just talkin' to hear himself talk. About some cord wood.

GRANDMA

It don't seem as if anybody *could* be so interested in cord wood.

MIS' ABEL

They ain't nothin' in the world for Ezra but just Ezra. Nothin' in the world for him but just—him.

GRANDMA

[*Looking off.*] Don't you s'pose there is? It don't seem like they's enough to *any*body to occupy 'em the whole time.

[*Up to the open door comes* PETER. *He is tall, awkward, grave; long, uncovered wrists, heavy, falling hands; but he has an occasional wide, pleasant, shy smile.*

PETER

[*On the porch.*] Good morning, Mis' Abel.

MIS' ABEL

Oh, good morning, Peter. I just happen to be ironin' a flat-piece, so I don't have to put my mind on it. I'm goin' to do the collars next [*pointedly*], and they take thought. What's wanted?

PETER

[*Shuffling, turning his hat.*] Any groceries this morning, Mis' Abel?

MIS' ABEL

Groceries?

PETER

[*Nods and enters.*] I've started takin' orders for Ferguson.

MIS' ABEL

Well, I'm glad to hear that. When do you start?

PETER

To-day.

MIS' ABEL

Does many order to the door?

PETER

I dunno. I've just started. I'm just startin'. Now.

MIS' ABEL

[*Rubbing her iron on the carpet.*] I ain't doin' no orderin' to-day. We've got to eat up what we've got. Unless you want to bring me fif' cents worth o' granulated sugar. You might do that. Get up there and get me that basket of odds an' ends on the top of the cupboard. Seems to me I see a piece o' beeswax up there.

PETER

[*Finishes writing down the order for sugar and brings a chair from near* GRANDMA'S *chair.*] I thought I'd just stop in an' see. You don't think she—[*he stumbles over the chair he is carrying*] —she wouldn't want anything this morning, would she, Mis' Abel?

MIS' ABEL

Who's she? Who you talking about?

PETER

Why, Inez.

MIS' ABEL

I thought it was Inez. Why didn't you say so in the first place? I hate di-plomacy in man or beast.

PETER

[*Who has not quite reached the cupboard with the chair, sets it down and turns abruptly.*] Well, then, I'll say it now. Mis' Abel! Why don't she treat me right?

MIS' ABEL

Treat *you* right? [PETER, *his momentary courage going, takes the chair on over to the cup-*

board, turns, nods mutely.] Why, I don't see how she can. Near as I can make out, you never open your head when you're with her.

PETER

[*Climbing on chair.*] It's funny about me, Mis' Abel. [*From the chair.*] Honest, I dunno what to do about me, sometimes.

MIS' ABEL

Well, *stop* thinkin' about you so much.

PETER

[*Spreading out his hands.*] I do try to. But when I try to think how to stop myself thinking about myself, there's myself thinkin' about me.

MIS' ABEL

Think about somethin' else, then! Get me down that basket. You can stand and talk to me all day. I don't see why you can't talk to her.

PETER

[*Reaching for basket.*] *I* could talk all right enough. But my tongue won't. I could—but my tongue, it won't. [*Turns with the basket.*] Why, some girls I know I can jolly like the dick-

ens. But Inez—when she comes along, Mis' Abel, I can't remember anything I know. [*Has down the basket and turns with it in his hands.*] History now—I know a real lot of history. And about birds and things. I'd *like* to talk with her about them. But last week, when I took her to the picnic, I couldn't think out any of 'em to say no more'n a *hen.*

[*He makes a large gesture with the basket at a perilous angle.*

MIS' ABEL

[*With a quick movement to catch the basket.*] Well, don't ask me to tell you how to court. Men that don't know history from a coach-and-four can court successful. [*Hunting for bees-wax in the basket.*] But you can't expect Inez to know whether she likes you or not if you sit like a block. Say something—do something, so's she'll know you're alive.

PETER

[*Despondently, as he climbs down.*] I know it. I ain't much. An' what little I am don't show through somehow. [*He drags the chair back to its place beside* GRANDMA *in* MIS' ABEL'S *assenting silence. Sets the chair down with a*

bang.] Honest, Mis' Abel, I wouldn't care much what happened to me.

[GRANDMA *looks up at him, and drops a ball of carpet rags.* PETER *picks it up and it unrolls away from him toward the door.* GRANDMA *suddenly laughs out, an old woman's laugh, shrill, but not unkindly.*

PETER

[*Miserably.*] I guess I *am* a joke.

GRANDMA

Joke nothin'. You're a human. You're a human an' you don't know it. I see a-many in my day.

MIS' ABEL

[*Waxing her iron.*] Well, a body needn't be a fool if they are human. My goodness, if Inez don't get here with that starch—

[INEZ *comes up on the porch. She is slight, and very girlish. She wears a straight, dull reddish gown. She is hatless and excited.*

INEZ

[*With marked and slightly ironical sweetness to* PETER, *who is almost at the door.*] So sorry

to have missed you, Peter. Good-bye, then. Mother! Guess!

MIS' ABEL

[*Ironing.*] Guess what? I'm too busy.

INEZ

Well, but listen. It's important. It's awful—

MIS' ABEL

[*Pausing, iron in hand, and looking over her shoulder.*] Well, out with it. What is it? What you making such a fuss about it for?

INEZ

It's Mis' Ellsworth's sister. She's died out West. And they're sending her little boy out here to Mis' Ellsworth.

MIS' ABEL

[*Setting down her iron.*] My land a living! Carry Ellsworth with a boy on top of everything else!

INEZ

I know it. She just heard last night. And she's home trying to think what to do.

MIS' ABEL

When's he going to get here?

INEZ

To-night. To-night on the 7:58.

MIS' ABEL

[*Pushing her hair back and taking her hat with it.*] Ain't that just the end of everything?

INEZ

And her with nobody to do a thing for her.

PETER

[*Who has dropped the ball again at sight of* INEZ, *has been making more and more of a tangle of the carpet rags ever since she entered.*] They couldn't anybody do anything, could they?

INEZ

Well, of course they could! There'll be things for everybody to do that knows her.

[PETER *comes toward her, his tangle of carpet rags following him. He and* INEZ *talk apart, he awkward and mostly mute, she evidently mocking him as they try to disentangle the rags.*

MIS' ABEL

[*Has walked over toward* GRANDMA *and stands, one arm akimbo.*] Did you understand, Grandma, Carry Ellsworth's sister's boy is coming to live with her.

[*With disapproving emphasis.*

GRANDMA

Boy? A little boy?

MIS' ABEL

Yes, sir. To-night. Comin' to-night on the 7:58.

GRANDMA

[*Placidly.*] Ain't that nice?

MIS' ABEL

Nice? And her all alone in the world?

GRANDMA

Yes. Him comin' and her all alone. She won't be alone no more. I wish't I was younger and could do for one.

MIS' ABEL

My land, I should think you've had enough to do for. I guess you never had no peace till you

come into our family that you didn't begin by belongin' to.

GRANDMA

[*Bursting out.*] *Peace!* That's it. Now I've got peace. Peace an' carpet rags.

[*When they are not looking she gives a big white ball of carpet rags a vicious throw through the shed door.*

MIS' ABEL

[*Harking back.*] Nice. You think it's nice. Why, Carry Ellsworth won't know what to do with a boy no more than nothing in this world. I dunno what she *is* goin' to do to dress him.

INEZ

[*Turning with the properly wound ball.*] We'll have to think of somebody that'll have some cast-off clothes.

MIS' ABEL

[*Impatiently.*] Boy's duds makes awful good weather strips. Before we got the upstairs plastered I use' to wish I'd had a boy or two. It's goin' to be an awful nuisance, doin' for him.

There's some of your pa's clothes she might use. I dunno's it'll need clothes first pop, though. But they's everything to think of—

[PETER *starts forward, his face bright with what he means to try to say.*

PETER

Oh, Inez. . . . That is, oh, Mis' Abel. I'm a boy. I mean I was a boy. I mean I've got some trousers—and a coat—and another coat. Shall I get 'em?

MIS' ABEL

What do you mean—something to cut over? Well, get 'em, of course. What you standing there for? Get 'em and bring 'em here. Inez, you run over an' ask Mis' Trot to come in for a minute. Mind you say *a minute*, or she'll set the whole forenoon.

PETER

[*At the door.*] Are you comin' now, Inez? I —I go that way too.

INEZ

[*Airily.*] Oh, don't you wait for me, Peter. I've got some things to see to.

[*Exit* PETER, *looking at her dumbly.*

INEZ

Mother, hasn't Peter got any lungs?

MIS' ABEL

Lungs?

INEZ

Or maybe it's brains. He looks nice enough—he looks real nice. But he acts as if he didn't have good sense when it comes to talkin'.

MIS' ABEL

Your pa was the same way.

INEZ

[*Indignant.*] *Father?*

MIS' ABEL

Certainly. After we was married, whenever he begun actin' like he knew it all, an' like I wasn't nothin' but the fly-leaf o' things, I used to remember how perfectly simple he did use' to act when I first knew him—when he was first makin' up. An' many's the time I've just laughed to myself, and gone and done like he told me to, sheer through rememberin' how simple and scairt and green he did use to act.

INEZ

[*Softly.*] Father? *Father!*

MIS' ABEL

Him. Now run for Mis' Trot and don't be lettin' me let my spare room pillow shams dry. I guess I'll carry this one in here out o' the dirt.

[*Exit with sham.*

GRANDMA

Daniel was like that too. He done things regular greenhorn. I remember the day we was engaged, he almost made such a botch of it I didn't know what he meant. He busts out and says, "*Will you?*" an' I thought he meant would I go to the huskin' bee and I said, "Yes." When I see my mistake—well, I let it go at that. I see what hard work he was makin' of it.

INEZ

That was old uncle Daniel, wasn't it? I remember him. He was awful old.

GRANDMA

Well, but I bet he was consider'ble more up to snuff than your young popinjays is now!

INEZ

[*Hastily.*] Oh, yes. Oh, I know— [*She retreats to the door and is met on the threshold by* MIS' ELMIRA MORAN.] Oh, good morning, Mis' Moran. Come in. Mother'll be back in a minute. Sit down.

[*Exit.*

MIS' MORAN

[*Stout, sixty, gets about with difficulty. She has a scarf wound many times about her head, but no shawl. Unwinds scarf deliberately and sinks in rocker as she speaks.*] I dunno as I can. My leg is so bad I can hardly hobble. And my left shoulder don't get no better. Nor my head—it don't act right. I dunno but my time is come and my grave is diggin' around the next corner. I feel that way. I told Jake so.

[*Enter* MIS' ABEL.

MIS' ABEL

Good mornin', Mis' Moran. Ain't it just perfectly dreadful about—

MIS' MORAN

Dreadful! I dunno what I am goin' to do if it keeps up. I was just sayin', I said so to Jake

only this mornin'. I says, "Jake," I says, "I'm gettin' so that I'm su'prised whenever I wake up alive. Whenever I do it," I says, "it's like every blessed mornin' of my life was a genu-ine resurrection for me. I feel it."

MIS' ABEL

What you talkin' about?

MIS' MORAN

If that ain't just like Jake's treatment of me. Right while I was talkin' to him, Jake asked me if I'd remembered to set the pancakes. Said he didn't hear me do it.

MIS' ABEL

Well, but land, land—what's that got to do—

MIS' MORAN

I'd been goin' to tell him about my back, but I hadn't the heart. I just laid and cried. Mis' Abel, my back's been behavin' so queer, I can hardly move it. Why, the last few days—

MIS' ABEL

[*Positively.*] Just you put your finger on the

place, Elmiry Moran, till I tell you the news. Carry Ellsworth's got a baby.

MIS' MORAN

[*Sits bolt upright suddenly and with ease.*] A *what?*

MIS' ABEL

Yes, sir. It ain't here yet. It's due to-night.

MIS' MORAN

[*Rises, steps toward* MIS' ABEL *easily and eagerly.*] What under the sun do you mean, Dianthy Abel? Carry Ellsworth's goin' to have a baby . . .

MIS' ABEL

To-night. On the 7:58. Her sister's that died out West. At least the boy's alive and they're sending him to her.

MIS' MORAN

[*Limps slowly back to her chair.*] You'd ought not to give me them turns, Dianthy. The doctor says I mustn't forget for a single minute the condition I'm in. How old is he?

MIS' ABEL

Well, let me see. . . .

[INEZ *appears in doorway with* MIS' TROT. MIS' TROT *is little and "wiry" and active and alert. She comes in with a collar in one hand and a brooch in the other.*

INEZ

Here's Mis' Trot, Mother.

MIS' TROT

Well, did you ever *hear* anything like it, ever? Carry Ellsworth, of all the folks under the canopy.

MIS' ABEL

That's just exactly what I said.

INEZ

[*Going to table where lamps are ranged and beginning to clean them.*] How much does she get a month now?

MIS' TROT

[*At the mirror over the shelf, putting on her collar, speaks with the brooch between her lips.*] Why, she only gets her eight dollars a month pension from her husband's leg.

MIS' ABEL

And then of course whatever she earns substitutin' clerkin', when clerks are sick.

MIS' MORAN

But barrin' Christmas week I don't believe that amounts to shucks for pay.

MIS' TROT

[*Drawing up as a matter of course to help* INEZ *with the lamp chimneys.*] It struck me all of a heap. An' we'd just found a buffalo bug in the parlour carpet. Yes, sir. A buffalo bug. In my *parlour.* I tried to step on it—but you know how they are. No corpse to 'em whatever. I couldn't tell whether I hit it or not—and they always run like horses. I've come right off an' left him there, if he *is* there. I wouldn't of done such a thing, but, thinks I, what's Carry Ellsworth goin' to *do?* How old's this child?

MIS' ABEL

That's what we was figurin' when you come in. Now, Lucretia Ellsworth was married the year we moved out of the Kane house—no, that was Elmira, wasn't it? I guess Lucretia wasn't married till the next year. We was livin' in the Mitchell house.

MIS' MORAN

I thought you lived in the Mitchell house before you lived in the Kane? Wasn't you livin' in the Mitchell house when our barn burned?

MIS' TROT

N—o. [*That peculiar, long-drawn "no," with a sound of d in the n.*] You wasn't. Why—[*to* MIS' MORAN]—your barn never burned till the winter I was livin' alone. I remember wakin' up alone in the house and seein' the glare.

MIS' ABEL

I *know* we was livin' in the Mitchell house when Lucretia was married because I remember runnin' acrost home for more spoons durin' the ceremony. I know I missed my cry altogether, 'count o' not gettin' back till the congratulations. I'd hid my spoons in the spare room closet and I come over after 'em, all hurried and rattled an' dressed up and I could *not* remember where I'd put them. Let's see that was six—seven—eight—

MIS' MORAN

Oh, that wasn't more'n seven years ago this summer. Because we bought out the Sparks grocery most eight years ago, an' I remember

sellin' Hackett Ellsworth the five pounds o' rice.

MIS' TROT

Why, Mis' Moran—it was *all* of eight years ago. You forget how Time flies. I'd 'a' said nine, to be on the safe side.

MIS' ABEL

Yes, it must 'a' been eight years ago. I know it was the year Inez had her first ready-made suit. Yes, Carry's boy must be about six-seven years old. It don't seem possible.

INEZ

Carry? I thought you said Lucretia's wedding?

MIS' ABEL

Well, Carry was married right after. She hadn't meant to be so soon. But her father didn't want to put up the parlour stove so long's the girls wasn't goin' to be home, so she was married in the fall to save the bother of a stove weddin'.

MIS' MORAN

Six-seven years old. Land, land. Just the hard age to take care of, when they begin to be smart. What *is* she goin' to do?

MIS' ABEL

Just his mere victuals is an item.

MIS' TROT

[*Sighing.*] Yes, sir. Another mouth is another mouth excep' when it's a boy's mouth. Then it's a regular bureau drawer.

MIS' MORAN

This is goin' to be an awful pull for the poor thing. She wouldn't take money, though, I don't suppose, even if anybody had any to offer her?

INEZ

Oh—not money!

MIS' TROT

No—the last way to help anybody is to give 'em money.

MIS' MORAN

Well, of course Carry'll look to us all to advise her some.

MIS' TROT

Oh, I dunno but advice is next worse than money.

MIS' ABEL

Well, it's goin' to be a terrible lot of trouble, whatever way you look at it. I should say the thing she needs is a *job*. But while she's gettin' it she'd ought to have some clothes and some extry bedding and I dunno what all. And you know what that means—attemptin' to get together truck like that.

MIS' TROT

I could 'a' done a little somethin' to-day if it hadn't been for that buffalo bug. But as it is I mustn't stay a minute longer. That animal'll be up into my lace curtains. How you goin' to go at gettin' the stuff together?

MIS' ABEL

[*Ironing hard.*] Well, I do hate to load it onto her in tied-up bundles at the back door. I dunno but we'd ought to go to the trouble of a pound party or somethin' like that.

MIS' TROT

[*Looking up with changing expression.*] That would be kind of nice—wouldn't it?

MIS' ABEL

Carry didn't have much of any wedding presents. And she never had a baby. I dunno as

I ever set foot in her house to any real occasion excep' a funeral. [*Turns with her iron in her hand.*] S'posin' we was to give her a kind of a shower?

MIS' MORAN

A what? A shower?

MIS' TROT

Like they have for babies?

INEZ

Oh, no. I know what Mother means. Like they have for brides.

MIS' ABEL

[*Sets down her iron, turns and leans against the ironing-board. Puts pillow sham on chair-back.*] I mean a shower—whether for bride, babe, or just anybody. It would be a lot of back-aching work, but we could make it real nice for her.

GRANDMA

[*Who has worked on, without looking up, until* MIS' ABEL *has said "shower." Then she has listened.*] So you could. Go on and do it. Seems to me you could make it so sort of sociable

and friendly it wouldn't seem a bit nasty, like charity does.

MIS' TROT

[*Looking away, with expression growing more rapt.*] Be kind of nice if you could have it the night the child gets here. But that's to-night. Of course you couldn't do that.

MIS' MORAN

Well, of course, I can't do a thing on account o' my back. But I should think if you could scrape the things together to-day so's to take 'em with you when you go, you could have it to-night all right.

MIS' TROT

[*Sitting upright—not suddenly, but still with her rapt manner, leaning forward with her hands across her knees.*] An' be there with 'em when she comes back from the depot with the boy!

MIS' MORAN

And you could have all the things she needs piled in the middle of the front room floor and you be in there with the door shut when she got there —[*edging forward on her chair*]—clothes and groceries an' I dunno but some toys—

MIS' ABEL

Be an awful job, managin'. How'd we let ourselves into the house?

MIS' TROT

[*Really kindling.*] Easiest thing in the world. I could go in an' set with her awhile before she starts for the 7:58. I could take her in a cup o' jell, or somethin'. And then I could tell her I'd set there on the porch so's to have a look at him when she got back.

MIS' ABEL

And then you could let us all in. That's the ticket! My land, look at me near settin' on my spare room pillow sham.

MIS' TROT

[*Laying down last lamp chimney and going to the door to shake the cloth. Speaks over shoulder, shaking cloth.*] Well, you do that and you can count on me to be over there when you come. You won't have much trouble gettin' the stuff. [*Giving the cloth to* INEZ *and turning toward the door.*] I've got to get back to that buffalo bug now, or it'll be layin' eggs in every pattern in the carpet.

[INEZ *carries lamps to their high shelf, puts away cloths.*

MIS' ABEL

You come back here.

MIS' TROT

[*Looks at her in surprise.*] But—

MIS' ABEL

You can't be going home, not with all there'll be to see to.

MIS' TROT

I just can't do it. That buffalo bug—

MIS' ABEL

You forget that buffalo bug, Mis' Trot, an' tell us what to have for refreshments. Strawberries? Or a little canned fruit and loaf-cake?

MIS' TROT

[*Returning.*] Why, of course we've got to feed 'em. I never thought o' that. *Canned fruit.* I'd just as soon anybody'd set me down to oatmeal as canned fruit—*when* it's a party. Strawberries—well. . . . No, for the land's sakes, if we're going to do it, let's us do it. Let's us have ice-cream or nothin'. . . .

MIS' MORAN

Be nice for the little boy, too.

MIS' ABEL

But, my land, it costs so to buy it—

MIS' TROT

Buy it? Who said anything about buying it? I'll freeze it. I can make it cheaper'n anybody in this town.

MIS' ABEL

Well, of course you can. That's what we'll do. You freeze it.

MIS' TROT

[*Excitedly.*] I can make it for fourteen cents a quart and freeze it myself, puttin' in our own cow and chickens. Yes, I'll do it—buffalo bug or no buffalo bug. A gallon'll be enough. We can all chip in—

[*Stamping up on the porch comes* EZRA WILLIAMS. *He is still more exasperated, and he comes in without greeting and with his hat on his head.*

EZRA

Well, I been to both you folks's houses, huntin' you up. An' I been down town lookin' for the

men. Which one o' you ordered wood? Whoever it was can send your men folks straight out here and unpile it from in front of my door, a stick at a time.

MIS' ABEL

I've told him we didn't order no wood.

MIS' MORAN

Well, *we* didn't. We been cuttin' wood from the wood lot for years.

MIS' TROT

We don't burn none. We burn soft coal—what we have left over after we've sprinkled the house with it thorough, an' our clothes an' our hands an' our necks.

EZRA

[*Stands puzzled but still warlike.*] Well, it's somebody's fool wood. It must belong somewheres in the block. Just ask your men folks when they come home this noon. I bet you one of 'em—

MIS' ABEL

Let's tell him. Wait a minute, Ezra. We want—

EZRA

I can't wait. I've got my hands so full they sag.

INEZ

Oh, Mr. Williams! I know whose wood that is. It must be Mis' Ellsworth's. I heard her wonderin' this morning why it hadn't come.

EZRA

Well, of all the snide swindles! I've got too much to do to unpile no cord of wood for no woman, widow or worse. . . .

[*He is at the threshold when* MIS' ABEL *stops him.*

MIS' ABEL

[*Clapping her hands and following him.*] Ezra! Ezra Williams. Stop goin' on and listen hard. Carry Ellsworth's sister's boy is comin' on to her to-night to support.

EZRA

[*At the door.*] Support? Well, I can't help that. I'm doin' some supportin' myself—working my wings off at it. And when it comes to an extry job for nothin'. . . .

MIS' ABEL

Yes, but Carry Ellsworth ain't you. Here's a boy plumpin' down on her to feed and clothe and lug up to man's estate.

EZRA

Well, ain't that just like a woman! Always gettin' herself come down onto by a lot o' distant relatives to support.

MIS' ABEL

Well, it *is* goin' to make trouble for everybody, but we thought we'd ought to—

MIS' MORAN

We thought it'd be real nice to do for her friendly, at a party—

MIS' TROT

And have 'em have refreshments—ice-cream and cake. And have everybody bring things.

MIS' ABEL

Wait till I tell him. And all be there when she gets back from the depot—all waiting, in her house, to s'prise her. Couldn't you get hold of some men and see what they could get together? Us ladies'll see to some clothes but—

MIS' MORAN

You scrape up some money, Ezra. Or some groceries—canned stuff, or like that—

MIS' TROT

And have 'em all sent to one place, hadn't we better?

MIS' ABEL

Have 'em all sent here. Then some of the men can come and tote 'em over when we see her go off to meet the 7:58.

EZRA

[*Who has stood shaking his head, edging away.*] Yah—pa'cel o' women. Ain't that just like 'em? Do you think I ain't got anything else to do? Ain't enough o' you women to tend to the society end of this town and its relations? No—don't you expect no time out of me. I might send over some little thing—but I ain't a minute to spare to-day, I tell you.

[*He is out the door with the last words.*

GRANDMA

[*Who has been looking up at him with fixed attention.*] Well, now, would you think *any-*

body would be that much interested in cord wood?

MIS' ABEL

No, sir, you wouldn't.

MIS' MORAN

Well, ain't that just awful for him not to do one thing?

MIS' TROT

Him with nothin' but cord wood on his hands, mind you—and me with a buffalo bug!

MIS' ABEL

As near as I can see we've got to put this thing through ourselves. You take up-street, Mis' Trot, and Mis' Moran, you take down-street—and I'll take the business part. Everybody's always after them, so I think you really squirm more askin' though you do get it so easy. Inez, you might be lookin' up some of your old picture books for the boy, or somethin' to amuse him. Come on, ladies. .

MIS' TROT, MIS' ABEL, MIS' MORAN

[*All talking together as they go out*, MIS' MORAN *having forgotten her limp.*] Who'll I get to bake the cakes? Well, I'd get some good

cake makers, for mercy's sakes, and there's only about six in town. I know where I'm going for a cake. I'm goin' straight for Mis' Ezra Williams.

[*Exeunt all three.*

INEZ

I'll iron off a flat piece or two first.

[*She goes to the shed to change the iron.*

GRANDMA

[*Peering out of the windows, through the plants.*] Dum 'em. They've gone off to do things. And I'm so old, so fool old. [*She smites her hands together.*] Oh, God. Can't you make us hurry? Can't you *make* us hurry? Get us to the time when we won't have to dry up like a pippin before we're ready to be took off? Our heads an' our hearts an' our legs an' our backs—oh, make 'em last busy, *busy*, right up to the time the hearse backs up to the door!

INEZ

[*Returns, picks up a piece from the basket, looks over at her.*] What's the matter, Grandma?

GRANDMA

Eh, nothin'. Only, I'm *folks*. That's all. I mean I was folks—me that was folks and now ain't.

[INEZ *looks at her, puzzled, and stands rubbing the iron on a newspaper when* PETER *re-appears in the doorway, the sugar under his arm, and in his hand a paper.*

PETER

Mis' Abel! I forgot to ask you just what things you need for that little boy— Oh, you here, Inez? I thought you was out. I thought— Here's your mother's sugar.

INEZ

[*Cooling her iron and not looking at him.*] I'm sorry Mother isn't in. She'll be back in a few minutes. Won't you come back then?

PETER

Inez! I've got lots of conversation in me.

[INEZ *searches his face swiftly. Goes on with ironing.*

PETER

[*With determination.*] I mean I don't say half the things I could say.

INEZ

[*With a moment of understanding and sympathy, she leans on the board and looks at him.*] What about, Peter?

PETER

About—about—oh, things. I think of so many things, Inez, when I'm alone, that I'd like to tell you.

INEZ

[*Still the same.*] Why *don't* you tell me, Peter? What are they about?

PETER

Well, woods things, and about water rats—and gophers—and—and—birds' nests!

INEZ

[*Still understanding, still patient.*] Well, I like these things, too, you know, Peter. Tell me some now.

PETER

[*Looking wild.*] Well. . . . Birds' nests. They's—they's quite a few birds' nests in the trees this spring. . . .

INEZ

[*Bursts into sudden uncontrollable laughter.*] In the trees! Oh, come now, Peter! Not birds' nests in the trees! Oh. . . . *Peter!* You mustn't tell me things like that!

PETER

[*Struggling desperately.*] Well, orioles now. Orioles. . . . I saw an oriole by Thatcher's barn. It's note was all wavy—

INEZ

[*Grave again.*] I know it. I've heard 'em. I love 'em.

PETER

And I thought—what was it I thought when I heard him call. . . .

INEZ

What . . . Peter?

[*Sets down her iron and, an elbow in her hand, the other hand over her mouth, she watches him quizzically and somewhat wistfully.*

PETER

[*Simply.*] It was something I liked to think. And I know I thought how you'd like it too.

Most folks don't hear 'em call. Lots of folks don't hear lots of things. But you do. And I do. Ain't that kind of nice—like them things was for you and me. . . . [*He catches at a corner of her apron, lifts it, and drops it, disconcerted.*] Mebbe you dunno what I mean.

INEZ

Oh, Peter, Peter, Peter! [*Laughs with her eyes shut.*] Oh, *Peter!*

PETER

[*Turns away, looks up in another part of the room.*] I know it. I don't know why it is I can't talk to you, Inez. I think of things I want to say to you, but when I'm with you I don't seem able to think 'em over again. There's history, now. I was readin' some history last night. There was so many things I wanted to tell you in it. I—I know you'd of thought so, too!

INEZ

Really. You think I would. Well, then, here I am. Try me!

PETER

I can't. I didn't plan it out this way—and you laughing.

INEZ

Oh, tell me—do. Was it about robbers—and princesses—and castles, Peter? Was it about knights and swords and roses—

PETER

Oh, it was better things. One was about Peter the Great, you know. Him. He was a—my, he was just a dandy!

INEZ

[*Now really at the end of her patience.*] Was that what you wished to tell me?

PETER

[*Miserably.*] No. But—

INEZ

Because if it was, I'm not in the least interested in Peter the Great! Not-in-the-least! [*She marches across the floor to the shed door to renew her iron, and on the threshold she turns, overcome again by the sorry figure he has cut.*] Peter, oh, Peter. . . .

[*Laughs with her eyes shut, and goes into the shed.* PETER *sits where she has left him, and drops his head in his hands.*

GRANDMA

[*Suddenly wheels in her chair.*] Young man! [PETER *lifts his head.*] Do you call that courtin'? [PETER *makes a helpless gesture.*] Because if I couldn't court no better than that I'd go and batch it and be done with it. You court like a stick of wood.

PETER

[*With a hopeless gesture.*] What'll I do?

GRANDMA

Do? Do what most everybody in the world has to do before they can fit their skins and skulls. Quit thinkin' about yourself. Dunce!

PETER

Well, but I—I—

[INEZ *comes back with the iron.* GRANDMA *subsides.* PETER *rises miserably.*

PETER

I guess I'll have to be going.

INEZ

Oh, must you? Well, good-bye, Peter.

PETER

I s'pose it's all done there is to do about the little chap—the one that's coming?

INEZ

Why, of course it isn't. Who did you think did it all?

PETER

Do—do you think I could be any use to 'em?

[INEZ *amazes him by dropping her flat-iron with a clatter on the ironing-stand and bursting into sobs.*

PETER

Inez! What is it?

[*He leaps to her, for the first time unconscious of himself, and puts his arms about her. For just a moment she leans to him, then springs free and speaks angrily.*

INEZ

It's nothing. It's nothing, I tell you. Go 'way, Peter. Please go 'way.

PETER

[*Stands still for a moment, then flings up his head and speaks in wonder.*] Inez! Inez! Do you *care* because I'm a fool?

INEZ

Go 'way, Peter. Please go 'way.

PETER

Well, I will go—now. But by the great horn spoon, Inez, I'll come back!

[*He rushes out.* INEZ *runs to* GRANDMA, *sinks beside her, buries her face in her gown.*

INEZ

Grandma, grandma. Why can't he be like other folks? *Why* can't he be like other folks?

GRANDMA

[*With great tenderness.*] Hush . . . dearie. Hardly anybody ever is. Hardly *any*body is.

[*Moment's pause.*

[*The door opens, and* MIS' ABEL *enters sidewise, her arms piled with old clothes. She is calling to somebody over her shoulder.*

MIS' ABEL

Well, supposin' they *are* too big? Send 'em along—send 'em along. I've cut over more of 'em than I ever made new ones. [*Closes the door behind her by pushing against it.*] My land,

that's been a tug. Folks has kept a-givin' me things an' I've kep' sayin' I'd take 'em right along. [*Dropping things on the floor and keeping them together.*] I know 'em. If folks had waited to send the stuff by somebody they'd 'a' took to lookin' it over again an' got to snippin' off the buttons and mebbe decide they was too good to give away at all. You needn't tell me. Folks is *folks*.

GRANDMA

[*Patting* INEZ'S *arms*—INEZ *has risen, and stands surreptitiously drying her eyes.*] That's it—that's it. Folks is folks, no matter how different—or similar. They can't fool us. Folks is folks.

INEZ

[*Turns and sees the garments which her mother is vaguely sorting.*] Oh, mother, how fine. Isn't that a pile? How fine!

[*Examines the garments and after a moment goes to the shed with her flatiron.*

MIS' ABEL

They's everything here. Enough to clothe Carry Ellsworth's nephew till he's black in the face. [*Enter* MIS' TROT, *breathless.*

MIS' TROT

I've solicited the rest of the stuff for the ice cream and I've got four cakes promised. [*Seeing the things on the floor.*] What a lot of splendid truck!

MIS' ABEL

Well, I'm most dead luggin' it.

[*She is stooping, turning over the things.*

MIS' TROT

[*Looking toward the door.*] And ain't the air nice in the forenoon? It seems like breathin' somethin' else. Comin' along by the wood yard, somethin'—I dunno whether it was the smell of the cedar shingles or the way the fence looked so nice and shady—but—[*little laugh*]—I ain't never felt so much like when I was a girl since I was born one. If it hadn't been for the thoughts of that buffalo bug in the house, I declare I would most of enjoyed myself.

MIS' ABEL

[*In falsetto.*] Did you? Why, I was just thinkin' that out in Main Street—that it seemed somethin' like quite a while ago. I thought it was the smell of the sage where somebody was fryin' pork, but mebbe it wasn't.

[*Enter* MIS' MORAN. *She is walking nearly erect and is hurrying somewhat.*

MIS' MORAN

It's all right. I just see Carry Ellsworth goin' into the post office, and I turned in on purpose. I told her somebody'd come over to-night and set while she went to the station, and be there when she comes back. She seemed to like the idee. Is this stuff all here?

MIS' ABEL

Yes, and more to come. Don't you think we'd best all be setting in there in the dark when she gets there with him, and all of us yell "Shower," shan't we? Just like they do?

MIS' TROT

[*Down on the floor beside the things.*] Poor little soul—it's him I'm a-thinkin' of. His mother dead and his home broke up and him dragged away from what folks he knows. *Look here!* Well, of course we're glad to have any of these things. [*Holds up a very ragged garment.*] How's this for a contribution? Nobody could patch that without they had a piece of cloth the size of the American flag—and not a button on it.

I'll bet you Mis' Hemenway give this—didn't she now?

MIS' ABEL

[*Looking closely.*] Yes, sir, she did. If you'd packed as many missionary barrels as I have you'd 'a' known it was Mis' Hemenway's without lookin'. Mis' Hemenway is a splendid cake-maker, but she *is* near-sighted about gifts she gives the poor.

MIS' TROT

[*Goes on sorting.*] I got to thinkin', supposin' it had been my Jeddie, if I'd been took, and him trapsed off to a strange state, and all. Ain't it real pitiful—well, now, would you think anybody'd give away a thing as good as that is?

[*She holds up a garment, and* MIS' MORAN, *who has been shaking her head over the other one, takes it from her.*

MIS' MORAN

No, I would *not*. Why, it looks like new from the store. They ain't a thread broke in it. *And* the buttons on. Who give this, Mis' Abel?

MIS' ABEL

[*Who is piling up some things from the lot on the table.*] I was wondering what he'd be like?

Nice little thing, I guess maybe—Carry's so nice. . . . [*Looks at the garment.*] Oh, that's Mis' Fitch—couldn't you tell? Her that always sends a thirteen-egg angels' food to the church suppers when a loaf o' pound cake would go down just as easy.

MIS' TROT

And her husband on thirty dollars a month. My good land, ain't folks the funniest things?

[*They all shake heads and compress lips, and* MIS' TROT *goes "T-t-t-t-t."*

GRANDMA

Ah—ain't you got used to that about folks yet, Mis' Trot? I want to know—I want to know. It don't hurt folks none to be funny, does it?

INEZ

[*Who is entering from the shed.*] Grandma, look. Here was one of your balls of carpet rags rolled way out there. Would you think it could?

GRANDMA

[*Peering at it.*] That's the very one I been lookin' for. I want it for the head.

INEZ

The head of *what*, Grandma?

GRANDMA

Never you mind. I got my own occupations. You ain't the only busy folks in the world, if you do act so cocky about it. I need something to do for as well as you.

INEZ

[*Who has been looking out the window.*] Mother, Mis' Ellsworth is coming.

MIS' ABEL

Mis' Ellsworth!

[*The women scurry around but they are too late.* MIS' ELLSWORTH *enters. She is a slight, pretty woman in a light blue gingham gown and wide straw hat. She is much agitated, and sinks in a chair by the door. She has a letter and a little parcel in her hand.*

MIS' ABEL

[*With the other two women, trying to hide the piles of garments.*] Why, Carry Ellsworth! You did give me a start. I'm—we've—we're—don't this look like carpet rags, though?

MIS' ELLSWORTH

[*Hardly hears.*] Oh, ladies. I've just got a letter—I've had another letter. 'Seems my little boy ain't comin' at all.

ALL [save GRANDMA]

Not comin'?

MIS' ELLSWORTH

[*Slowly.*] No. A sister of his pa's decided last minute she'd take him in. She's got five of her own, but she writes she dunno's one more'll make any difference.

MIS' ABEL

[*Sitting limply back in the clothes.*] Well, ain't that just the end of everything!

MIS' MORAN

Well, Carry—you can't help it, but be glad the little fellow ain't had all the way to come alone.

MIS' TROT

An' I ain't a doubt in the world he's got a better home than you could give him—anybody that can afford to have five children is rich enough to have six.

MIS' ABEL

And it *was* going to be awful hard on you to have him to do for.

MIS' ELLSWORTH

I know, I know. But it's goin' to be awful hard for me not to have him to do for. Last night—when I begun to plan—it come over me like it never done before what I'd missed in *not* bein' left with one. I was goin' to make him a bed on the lounge—I'd got it planned what clothes I could spare for the bed, and what I could make more of. I never got meals for a child—and I'd begun thinkin' what he could eat and what little things I could fix up for him. I was plannin' to keep chickens and to fix a sandpile in the backyard and a swing under the maple out in front—and I was thinkin' about his school and who'd be his teacher and what desk he'd have. I just see this little cap in the post-office store and I bought it for him. [*Unwraps a cap from a little package.*] I thought the feather'd look kind o' cute, stickin' up in front. And now here comes this—and it's all for nothin'—it's all for nothin'.

MIS' ABEL

But, Mis' Ellsworth, it *would* be hard for you. It would now!

MIS' ELLSWORTH

I'd like that kind o' hard.

MIS' TROT

And s'pose you'd of took down sick?

MIS' ELLSWORTH

Better body sick than heart sick.

MIS' MORAN

And s'pose you'd of *died*, Mis' Ellsworth?

MIS' ELLSWORTH

I'd of lived first now, anyway. And now I ain't. I never knew it—but I ain't.

MIS' ABEL

Oh, but Mis' Ellsworth. You've got your health and your gettin' along economical to brood over as it is.

MIS' ELLSWORTH

This would of kept me from broodin'.

[INEZ *goes softly, and mutely slips her arm about* MIS' ELLSWORTH.

MIS' ABEL

[*Openly breaks down and wipes her eyes on the garment she is holding.*] Oh, ladies! What's the use? We all know. I ain't had but one, but I know.

MIS' TROT

Yes. I've got seven an' sometimes I'm drove most to death with 'em—but I know.

MIS' MORAN

Well, I never had none—but I know.

GRANDMA

Eh, mine's dead—all dead. But I know.

INEZ

Oh, Mis' Ellsworth. An' I know, too.

[*In a moment at the door appears* PETER, *his arms ludicrously full of clothes and parcels.*

PETER

Look, Inez, look-a-here. See all I got a holt of—for the little chap.

[*He sees their mood and pauses, crestfallen.*

INEZ

[*Goes to him swiftly.*] Peter! What a lot you got. Dear Peter.

[*The door is pushed open by* EZRA WILLIAMS. *He has a small, closely wrapped bundle under an arm, and he is carrying a little chair.*

EZRA

[*Handing bundle to* MIS' ABEL.] There's a few little things my wife just sent over. This here little chair—I made it myself for our little boy before he was hardly out o' long dresses. I done the whole thing—pegged it myself, so's he could throw it around and it wouldn't get broke. He—he never grew up enough to use it . . . it's been settin' around my workroom—kind of in the way. It ought to be doin' somebody some good.

MIS' ABEL

That's certainly good of you, Ezra.

EZRA

Say, you'd ought to see Mis' Ellsworth's wood, piled by her back door neat as a kitten's foot. She ain't to home— [*Sees for the first time that* MIS' ELLSWORTH *is there, over near* GRANDMA.] Good souls! Have I let the cat out of the bag?

MIS' ABEL

No, Ezra—no, no. I was tryin' to tell you. He ain't comin'. The little boy ain't comin' after all.

EZRA

He ain't comin'?

MIS' ELLSWORTH

[*Coming forward.*] No, Ezra. They ain't goin' to give him to me. Somebody else has took him.

EZRA

Well, ain't that a shame. [*Bristling.*] Who's got him? Want I should get him for you?

MIS' ELLSWORTH

[*Shaking her head.*] No—you can't, Ezra. But you don't know—you'll never know how I feel about what you've done a'ready—you and the ladies and Peter and Grandma. . . . Would —you mind if we looked at the little clothes?

EZRA

No—why, look at 'em. They ain't much, I guess, for now-a-days. But his ma says she'd like you to have 'em. They was real good cloth in the beginnin'.

MIS' ELLSWORTH

[*Fingering the garments, turns quickly to the women.*] Ain't that what it is to have neighbours? Ain't it, though? Look at the bother you've been to. . . . An' now I won't need 'em.

MIS' ABEL

Don't you think a thing about us. We was glad to do it. I was feelin' cross as a wolf with all I had to do when Inez come in with the news. [*She is taking off her hat as she speaks.*] And now I feel—I feel like folks. An' Mis' Moran's leg and her back and Mis' Trot's buffalo bug—I guess they feel just the same about it.

GRANDMA

And me. So do I. I was just hatin' the sight o' my carpet rags. But look at what I stodged up for the little chap.

[*She holds up an absurd black doll with a white head.*

MIS' ELLSWORTH

Oh, Grandma!

GRANDMA

Don't you thank me. I liked doin' it. It was somethin' for somebody. It was real human to do.

MIS' ABEL

Well, we might as well pick 'em up.

INEZ

[*Turning to* PETER, *who stands apart.*] Peter, how dear of you to get all these things for him.

[MIS' ABEL *unwraps them, and they draw about her to look, all save* PETER, *who is standing a little apart.* INEZ *turns to him.*

PETER

I didn't get 'em *all* for him. I got 'em part for you.

INEZ

Well—it was dear of you anyway. What—what's that in your pocket, Peter?

PETER

[*Brings shyly from his pocket a little clown on a stick.*] I saw it in the store. I didn't know but what he might like it. If he ain't a-comin' we might as well throw it away.

INEZ

No! Give it to me.

PETER

[*Still holding toy and looking down at it.*] Why, it's nothin' but a clown. Like me, I guess. . . .

INEZ

Well, I want it all the same. . . . Oh, Peter, Peter, what a dear you are when you forget yourself!

[*He looks at her breathlessly, then suddenly takes her in his arms . . . and as he does so, tosses the clown-on-a-stick into the little vacant chair.*

PETER

Inez—Inez! Do you *mean* that? Oh, Inez, I tell you I'm forgettin' now. I'll never remember any more. [*He kisses her.*

[*As they stand so,* MIS' ABEL *turns and sees them. The others follow her look.* GRANDMA, *too, and they all turn and look at each other, silent and smiling. And then* GRANDMA *rises, and comes slowly down to them—bent and peering and kindly, and holding by one arm the doll she has made. As she passes the little vacant chair, near which* INEZ *and* PETER

stand, she drops the doll over the chair's back in order to take their hands. She stands between and a little back of them, facing the audience. She looks up at them and tries to speak to each in turn, and gives it up with a little helpless gesture and a smile and a hand patting the shoulder of each. They are all gathered near the two, the little garments EZRA *has brought still in the women's hands and* MIS' ELLSWORTH *still holding the cap with the feather.*

MIS' ABEL

[*Wiping her eyes swiftly.*] Strikes me the little chap is accountable for a whole heap he never even heard of.

GRANDMA

Eh—most folks always is.

IN HOSPITAL

By Thomas H. Dickinson

And lo, the Hospital, grey, quiet, old,
Where Life and Death like friendly chafferers meet.
—Henley.

To E. R. D.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

A Wife
A Husband
A Surgeon
An Interne
A Nurse

IN HOSPITAL

TIME: *A bright morning in late spring.*

SCENE: *A large room beside the operating rooms of a hospital. The general tone of the room is white, but an effort is manifest to make it somewhat cheerful in furnishings. The matting is a bright colour. The chairs and tables, though simple and unadorned, are artistic in shape. There are two doors in the room. The one at the back leads from the corridor. The one at the right leads into the operating rooms. There is no door on the left side of the room. The wall here is solid, and is provided, as is the left side of the back walls, with a continuous row of high windows neatly curtained with muslin. Through a broad aperture in the curtains the sunlight streams during the scene in a soft, unbroken, and ever broadening ray. The general effect should be one of lightness and simplicity, and formal cheerfulness.*

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At the rise of the curtain a NURSE, *daintily gowned and capped in hospital uniform, stands at the right of the centre of the room beside a high table. Her pencil is at her lips and her brows are puckered. She has been making some notes on a pad of report blanks. Beside her on the table there are towels, arranged in a neat pile, and a few pieces of linen.*

There enters at the centre door an INTERNE, *a young man of smooth face, hearty manners, and a soft step. He is dressed in immaculate white linen. The* INTERNE *goes toward a standing case at the back of the room, opens it and takes out some rolls of cotton.*

INTERNE

Good morning, Betty.

NURSE

[*Sweetly but abstractedly.*] Good morning. [*He piles up his rolls of cotton. After a pause she continues.*] Did I get any towels last night?

INTERNE

Eh?

NURSE

Nothing. [*She goes on pencilling.*

INTERNE

Well, I guess that's as much as I want for one trip.

[*Gathers up his bundles and goes out by the right door. He returns immediately with nothing in his hands, and begins again to collect the cotton.*

INTERNE

Did you miss your free hour yesterday?

NURSE

[*With pencil to lips.*] Uh-hu.

INTERNE

What's the trouble? Case serious?

NURSE

Oh, no. Doc thought I'd better not leave the afternoon before the operation. . . . What time is it this morning?

INTERNE

Now? Oh, about eight-thirty.

NURSE

I mean the operation.

INTERNE

[*Goes back to the case.*] Nine o'clock.

NURSE

Who gives the anæsthetic?

INTERNE

[*Taking out cans of chloroform.*] I do. [*After a pause.*] Sleep well, last night?

NURSE

She had me up several times. I thought she was talking to me. Talking in her sleep.

[*She continues to pencil while speaking.*

INTERNE

Nervous?

NURSE

Oh, she has grit.

INTERNE

You can't tell how it will hit them. Sometimes the patient that has the most grit when he is awake goes all to pieces when he's asleep.

NURSE

Last night she was saying something about Fred. I didn't understand exactly. I think he's

her son. Then once she asked me to bring the baby. I got up and spoke to her but she didn't hear me.

[*She has been stacking towels.*

INTERNE

[*Still rummaging in the case.*] Thinking about her kids. Well, that's natural. [*Humming.*] And a b-a, ba; and a b-e, be; and a b-i, bi; bay-be-bi.

NURSE

[*Sorting over her piles of material.*] What do you think of her chances?

INTERNE

Well, I dunno! I'm glad it isn't you going into the operation.

[*He comes over and leans on the other side of the high table and looks keenly at her.*

NURSE

Now, don't be foolish.

INTERNE

Aren't you glad I ain't?

NURSE

Ain't what?

INTERNE

Going in there under the knife.

NURSE

[*Gathering up her bundle.*] Of course not, smarty. Why should I care? Ta, ta.

[*She swings her head saucily and goes out by the centre door.*

[*The* INTERNE *returns to the case at the left back of the room and proceeds with his work.*

[*After a pause the centre door opens slowly and the* HUSBAND *appears. He is haggard, his clothes have a general air of neglect, his eyes are tired for lack of sleep. He carries his hat negligently crushed in his hand.*

INTERNE

[*Upon first seeing the* HUSBAND.] Ah, here you are.

[*He speaks in a hearty but somewhat hollow, professionally sympathetic way.*

HUSBAND

[*Shakes the hand holding the hat as if to shake aside any more formal greetings. He speaks as*

if with an effort, his voice is husky, and the organs do not immediately respond to his command. There is now no demand that he keep up appearances.] How is she?

INTERNE

Best reports this morning, glad to say.

HUSBAND

Have you seen her?

INTERNE

No, she isn't in my ward, but her nurse tells me she slept nicely, very nicely indeed.

HUSBAND

I am glad of that. . . . I didn't sleep.

INTERNE

Didn't sleep, eh? Well, I don't know as I blame you. Still you owe it to yourself—you know—

HUSBAND

I went to bed . . . but I couldn't sleep. I wandered around . . . outdoors.

[*He makes a futile gesture to indicate the aimlessness of his wanderings.*

INTERNE

Oh, of course, if you're nervous it's necessary to get it out of your system somehow. Only you ought to remember this, that you ought to keep yourself in good trim so that you can take good care of her when she goes home.

HUSBAND

I've heard all of that before. . . . A man does the best he can.

INTERNE

Oh, you mustn't take it too hard. [*Lightly.*] Operation every day here.

HUSBAND

Not this kind of an operation.

INTERNE

[*In pretended surprise.*] My dear man, it's not so unusual.

HUSBAND

[*Puts his hat down on the high table and turns wearily to the* INTERNE.] Maybe not. Maybe not. But I'd give my right arm to escape this for her.

[*The* INTERNE *proceeds with his work.*

[*The door opens and the* SURGEON *enters.*

He is a man of middle age. Long years of neglect of his own body have made him stooped, and unkempt, and shabby. His hair is thin and colourless and rough. His eyes are keen but shift easily from place to place. His hands are shapeless and worn, but the fingers are of an utmost dexterity and refinement in action. Under his right elbow a soft hat is crushed to his side. He carries his case in the right hand, while with his left hand he holds the knob of the door which he has just opened.

SURGEON

[*Speaking at the door to some one in the hall.*] I'm busy now. See me after ten o'clock.

[*Places his hat and case on the table and proceeds to take off his gloves. His voice as he speaks is a squeak which comes incongruously from his large frame.*

[*The* HUSBAND *comes forward and stands before the* SURGEON.

SURGEON

Hello, you beat me.

HUSBAND

Yes.

SURGEON

Well, how're you getting on this morning?

HUSBAND

Better, I guess.

SURGEON

That's good. That's good.

HUSBAND

Doctor, did you think I was a coward last night?

SURGEON

No, I don't remember that I thought particularly about it. [*Places his hat on the rack.*

HUSBAND

I want to tell you how it was. I had dozed off in my chair. I couldn't sleep in bed, and all at once I thought I saw her lying before me. I don't believe in signs, Doctor, I'm not superstitious; but that—well, it broke me up. Without thinking I rushed to the telephone and called your number. Thank you for being so kind to me.

SURGEON

[*Taking off his coat.*] That's all right. [*To the* INTERNE.] Are you ready, Vic?

INTERNE

Whenever you are.

SURGEON

Well, you might take a look around to see that everything is at hand. You know my way.

[*The* INTERNE *goes out the right door. The* SURGEON *proceeds to take off his coat and hangs it up.*

HUSBAND

Aren't you going to see her before she goes in there?

SURGEON

Nothing to see her about now.

HUSBAND

She just goes in there like into the dark?

SURGEON

[*Patiently.*] My experience is that it's better not to excite patients. She won't see me until she wakes up.

HUSBAND

Doctor, I've got to ask you some questions.

SURGEON

Fire away.

HUSBAND

Can she take the anæsthetic all right?

SURGEON

Don't you worry about that. [*Gathers up his case and starts to the right.*] Well . . .

[*Speaking in general without reference to any one.*

HUSBAND

[*Stopping him.*] Doctor, give me a minute. Wait. Things seem to be moving so fast my courage for one minute doesn't help me the next.

SURGEON

[*Sets down case on bench and peers keenly at* HUSBAND.] Go on—I'll give you a minute.

HUSBAND

How do you look upon a thing like this? . . . Do you go into that room determined to save life?

SURGEON

Suppose I answer, what do you expect to gain by it?

HUSBAND

I want to understand you so that whatever happens I won't blame you.

SURGEON

You're all right. You want the truth and I s'pose I owe it to you. No, that isn't what I'm thinking about when I go in there.

HUSBAND

I was afraid so. You value—something else more than you value the life of your patient?

SURGEON

It isn't a question of what I value. It's a question of the thing that's put into my hands to do.

HUSBAND

Of the operation you've got to perform.

SURGEON

That's it precisely. Now I'll illustrate it to you. Now, listen, for I want you to understand that I wouldn't talk to you unless I thought I

ought to. [HUSBAND *nods.*] Uh—yes—this'll do. What do you s'pose the sailor man thinks when they put him to working the pumps? Does he say, "I've got a thousand lives to save," or does he say, "I've got to get the water out of that there hold?" What does he say?

HUSBAND

He says he's got to get the water out of the hold.

SURGEON

You're right. Take another case. What does the soldier say when things get good and hot around him? Does he strike a pose like a play actor and say, "I've got to save my country and the grand old flag?" Not much he don't. I'll tell you what he says. He says, "I've got to get over that stone wall there and plug the man on the other side." That's what he says, ain't it?

HUSBAND

Yes.

SURGEON

And if a racer is getting into a ticklish place he doesn't watch the judge's stand, does he, but watches the track and pegs away?

HUSBAND

Yes.

SURGEON

Well, that's the doctor's way of looking at it. He watches the track and lets the flag take care of itself.

HUSBAND

And ignores the possible consequences?

SURGEON

And lets the consequences take care of themselves. We've got a job to do and we do it.

HUSBAND

And your purpose isn't to save life?

SURGEON

Not exactly; it's to do a good operation.

HUSBAND

From my point of view it's your first business to save my wife's life.

SURGEON

Well, it's jolly lucky you ain't your wife's doctor. From my point of view it is my first business to perform the operation and give the treatment called for by the diagnosis.

HUSBAND

And you shut your eyes to everything else?

SURGEON

Shut our eyes! No, sirree! Shut our eyes nothing. We see everything that goes on. We see death coming along and we ain't scared. We've got to see him if we're going to fight him. And we see folks suffering and we can't stop for sympathy. Sympathy in a doctor is near to weakness. What do we do? We just keep ahead and do our stint. We can't pay any attention to life and death. But they live, by George, they live, if we do the stint right. The best motto I ever heard for a doctor was, "Keep your eyes open, keep your heart closed, keep your hands clean, and heal the sick." [*Grasping the handle of his case suddenly.*] What was it you said you wanted to talk to me about?

HUSBAND

Nothing now, doctor. I am willing to leave her in your hands.

SURGEON

[*Reaching again for his case.*] Eh, well. . . .

HUSBAND

May I see her before she goes in there?

SURGEON

Eh, see her? You want to talk with her? Let's *see* you. [*Again he drops the case upon the table, this time placing his hand upon* HUSBAND'S *shoulder and turning him so that he can look into his face and study him.*] How's your grit? [HUSBAND *nods and smiles.*] Let's see your teeth. [HUSBAND *opens his lips and shows his teeth firmly pressed together.*] Now your eyes. [*He opens* HUSBAND'S *lids and the eyes gaze at him without a quiver.*] Now swallow. [HUSBAND *does so. They both smile.* SURGEON *slaps him on the shoulder with a jovial laugh.*] You're all right. You're a man, all right.

HUSBAND

I think you can trust me.

SURGEON

Yes, I reckon I can. At any rate I can trust her. And I'm going to guarantee that I can trust you.

HUSBAND

Very good.

SURGEON

I'm going to tell you what she said when this came on. Do you know what she said? She said, "Don't tell him how serious my condition is. I couldn't bear for him to know."

HUSBAND

She said that?

SURGEON

She did.

HUSBAND

She wanted to protect me.

SURGEON

You're right. She wanted to protect you. Just think of it, will you? You couldn't be a coward after that— [*He looks* HUSBAND *in the eye.*] Could you?

HUSBAND

No.

SURGEON

[*Again slapping him heartily upon the shoulder, repeats in a loud, encouraging tone.*] No!! [*He turns awkwardly to go out.*] She may come here for ten minutes.

[*He rings an electric bell on the wall, gathers up his things and goes out at the right.*

[HUSBAND *stands in his place.*

[INTERNE *enters from the right.*

INTERNE

Hello, that sun is bright. It makes a clear line straight across the room.

HUSBAND

I couldn't ask for a more beautiful morning.

[*Enter by the centre door* WIFE *and* NURSE.

[WIFE *advances weakly but easily and gracefully toward the centre of the room. She is dressed in a bright kimono which sets off modestly her slight but charming outlines. Her long rich hair is parted in the middle and braided in two strands, one of which hangs down her back. The other is thrown over her shoulder and hangs in front. She is smiling brightly and with only the slightest tinge of wistfulness up at her husband.*

[*The* NURSE *comes around to the* INTERNE, *who stands at the right side of the room.*

INTERNE

You are to go into the operating room. Doctor needs you.

[NURSE *goes out, followed by the* INTERNE.

[*It is clear that* HUSBAND *will have complete control of himself.*

WIFE

[*Playfully.*] Hello, Rumble Growler.

HUSBAND

Why, Pet, are they making you walk all alone?

WIFE

Of course. What do you think I am? An invalid?

HUSBAND

Not the least bit in the world. But when I'm paying this hospital all the money they are charging me I want them to give you some attention.

WIFE

You're to pay me the attention now.

HUSBAND

Very well, then you are not to stand any more. You're to sit down.

WIFE

Oh, it won't hurt me to stand. You're to look at me first. How do you think I look?

HUSBAND

Fine!

WIFE

And how do you like my hair? See my pig tails?

[*She fishes around behind her and brings the other strand to the front and holds both out to him.*

HUSBAND

[*Reaches down to take the closed hands in his own.*] Great! How long is it? Um!

WIFE

You mustn't touch me. It's expressly against orders. Stay your distance.

HUSBAND

Must I? That's hard.

WIFE

Orders!

HUSBAND

It's orders, too, that I should take the best of care of you while you are visiting me; and so you are to sit down here and never move.

[*He gets chair and she sits down.*

WIFE

All right; you sit there.

HUSBAND

[*Sitting down near her.*] Right here.

WIFE

Grumbler, you're not looking well. I think Sarah isn't giving you good meals.

HUSBAND

Oh, yes, she is.

WIFE

Do you have them just at the right time? You're always so careless, you know, if I don't watch you.

HUSBAND

Promptly on the dot.

WIFE

Does she cook your steak right and do you always have your salad?

HUSBAND

Well, now, we'll let those little details pass if you will tell me something. What do you put your hair up that way for?

WIFE

Oh, so I . . . [*Remembering that this infringes on a forbidden topic.*] Because it's nicer that way. It's more becoming. Don't you think so?

[*Turns around on the chair to give him the effect.*

HUSBAND

It certainly is. I think you ought to wear it in two braids all the time, don't you?

WIFE

I think I will after this. I like it. . . . You ought to see the care the nurses take of me. One nurse all the time and sometimes two or three. And they give me everything I want.

HUSBAND

That's good.

WIFE

And often they think of things and do them before I even know I want them. But they're

always just what I'd have wanted if I'd thought.

HUSBAND

That's good. Might as well do something for their money.

WIFE

And Grumbler.

HUSBAND

Yes.

WIFE

[*Slyly.*] The doctors are very nice. One of them—

HUSBAND

You know what I said I'd do to the fellow who came hanging around.

WIFE

[*Shaking her head playfully and defiantly.*] Nope!

HUSBAND

Well, I'll do it, doctor or no doctor.

WIFE

You always said I couldn't have a lady's maid, too. I have one here all to myself.

HUSBAND

You can have one for a couple of weeks. But you will make up for it after that. When you come home you'll have to go to work.

WIFE

What if I don't do it? What if I'm spoiled here?

HUSBAND

You know what we do to the children when they won't work. They go to bed without eating.

WIFE

Cruel old Rumble Growler!

HUSBAND

You don't know how cruel I will be when you come home. [*He rises from his chair and turns around suddenly with his back to her. The bright look for a moment departs from her face, leaving it wan. When next he speaks it is in a different voice, still, however, under perfect control.*] Have you noticed how bright the sunlight is and how beautiful the morning?

WIFE

[*Also in a deeper voice.*] Yes. As I lay in my bed this morning—I awoke early, you know—

I watched a narrow sunbeam get wider and longer and finally cross the room until it pointed right at me. Why, this sunbeam is moving, too. Oh, I love the sun.

HUSBAND

So do I—and everything that is under the sun. [*Both are silent for a while. He walks to the window.*] Out there in the street a little shaver is riding in his cart behind a dog. Several steps behind is a little girl, his sister, I'll bet. Yes, she *is* his sister, for she is crying with her mouth wide open but he won't stop. Isn't it strange how quiet it is in here? All the noise of the street is silenced. Man's inhumanity to woman. Go on, little warrior, in your cart!

WIFE

Tell me about the children.

HUSBAND

Oh, they are getting on—so, so.

WIFE

I know they will.

HUSBAND

But you should see them! [*Turning toward her. She nods without speaking.*] They're try-

ing hard to be good, but it's a stiff pull for the little rascals. Well, I don't blame them. Freddie put me in quite a hole the other day. "What's the use of being good when mother's away?" he asked. [*She smiles.*] For the life of me I couldn't think of an answer. What would you say?

WIFE

I'd be as bad off as you were.

HUSBAND

But Robert wasn't. He had an answer. "So mother will be happy when she comes back," he said. Wasn't that good?

WIFE

Just like Robert.

HUSBAND

I don't know what we should have done without Robert. He serves at the table. He answers the door and the telephone. He ties the baby's bib. How he thinks of everything I don't know. I—I'm so helpless. Why didn't you ever teach me to take charge of the house?

WIFE

Fancy teaching you anything you didn't want to learn.

HUSBAND

[*After a moment's deep silence.*] All the kiddies send you their love.

WIFE

Even Freddie?

HUSBAND

Oh, Freddie, to be sure. Guess you know about what he's doing. Upstairs and downstairs. Outdoors and in.

WIFE

I hope he won't get hurt.

HUSBAND

Trust him for that. But how do you keep him in aprons? They're all dirty already. Yesterday he got all scratched up trying to put Kitty to bed and make him say his prayers. He has fallen in the flour bin, put the telephone out of commission, pulled the table-cloth and dishes off the table. There isn't anything he hasn't done. Freddie will welcome you back with a dish-pan band, when you come home.

WIFE

[*Closing her eyes.*]—Yes—

HUSBAND

[*Pretending not to notice, though it is clear that he does.*] Did I tell you about night before last?

WIFE

No.

HUSBAND

Well, that night he slept over at Cousin Ruthie's house. All his nightgowns were dirty so Aunt Ella made him wear one of Ruthie's. But she had the hardest time making him wear it. The next morning he said to me, "I'm glad I ain't a woman, ain't you, Paw?" "Yes, I suppose so," said I. "Why?" "Oh, they're all right, I guess," he said, "but before I'll wear another of those women's nightgowns I'll go to bed raw."

WIFE

[*Smiling.*] Little man. Does he ask for me much?

HUSBAND

Just this morning he said, "Pop, you tell mamma to come back quick or I'll elope with the

ice man." . . . Well, they're good children. I don't think any one ever had better. And that's something, isn't it?

WIFE

That's everything. They make me very happy. . . . You know, dear, I have been doing a good deal of thinking since I came here. I've seen things very clearly, clearer than even at home. I think I've been able to tell why I've been so happy. You find out what's really worth while in a time like this, don't you?

[HUSBAND *nods.*

WIFE

I won't say anything about you. You know. But the children. [*She smiles.*] Yes, I know why I've been happy.

HUSBAND

Why, we've both been happy.

WIFE

See! The sun is crossing the room just like it did this morning. It is coming nearer and nearer to you. Oh, I'm so glad it's a sunshiny morning.

HUSBAND

It travels pretty rapidly, doesn't it? The point of it is just touching that stand over there. You remember how far away it was before?

WIFE

Yes, and it will go right on. In an hour it will reach the top of the stand and then it will begin to shine on the door on the other side. . . . In an hour, dear.

HUSBAND

Yes, not long. . . . About an hour.

WIFE

I think— [*She pauses.*] When it begins to shine on the door— [*She breaks off.*] You'll watch the sunbeam, won't you? I may need you.

[HUSBAND *nods without answering, and raises his arms a little from his side with a futile gesture.*

WIFE

Don't speak. . . . It isn't necessary, is it?

HUSBAND

[*With difficulty.*] No.

WIFE

You said everything was very silent out of doors. It seems to be silent in here, too. . . . There are times that silence is better than anything else. . . . Doesn't it seem to you that somehow Time is going on silently . . . just like that beam of light?

HUSBAND

[*Trying to smile.*] Yes, I suppose so.

WIFE

There, there. And Grumbler, listen. I've never been so happy in my life. And I haven't any pain, now. Isn't that strange? And isn't that the way it should be? Think how promising it is. [*Steps are heard at the right.*] And we're both ready, aren't we?

[*She smiles up at him bravely. There slowly breaks over his heavy face a smile no less brave and quiet than hers.*

HUSBAND

Yes.

[*The door on the right opens.*

INTERNE

[*Speaking off the stage to the* NURSE.] Tell your patient we are ready.

[*The* NURSE *comes out the right door.*

WIFE

[*Turning steadily.*] Do you want me now?

NURSE

[*Coming to support her.*] Yes . . . all ready . . . do you want my help?

WIFE

Oh, no. I can walk perfectly. [*Over her shoulder lightly.*] By by, Grumbler.

HUSBAND

So long, Pet.

[WIFE *and* NURSE *walk to the door and go out.* NURSE *closes the door.*

HUSBAND *stands in the middle of the room watching until they have disappeared. Then he walks to the door and stands near it as if looking and listening. The room is very quiet. After a moment he backs away from the door to the centre of the room and there seats himself in the chair in which she had sat. His face,*

which is cast straight to the front with drawn lustreless eyes, is blank and impassive. He is waiting.

The sunbeams begin to fall on the wall near the door. But he does not see them. His hands are drawn together until his fists are taut knobs. Now and again he turns with a vacant stare and an immobile face toward the door. Nothing enlightened he turns again and rests his eyes on space waiting for news. Now and then his mouth twitches. His lips become dry and he moistens them with his tongue. The right side of his jaw sinks, pulling his mouth down until it becomes an irregular line cutting his gaunt features. Then he draws his features back into control again and the expression of vacant pain returns to his face.

Thirty seconds pass, representing a long space of time in the operating room on the right. The beams of the sun fall steadily in a diagonal line toward the door. Then suddenly he first sees the beam. His eyes light with understanding, the vacant expression leaves his face. From this time on he follows the course of the sun-ray with deep attention. He leans forward, his

feet drawn close under him, his hands clasping the arms of his chair. Once he rises and backs off that he may better watch the ray of light. He gives all his attention to the quiet room toward which the sunbeam is moving.

A minute has passed on the stage; a minute and a half. Perhaps three or four minutes elapse on the stage before the symbolism of the long period of time in the operating room on the right can be considered complete. During this time he sits in absolute silence, a silence made more profound by the sense of significance which his attitude attaches to it. As time goes on he becomes quieter, whether with resignation or strength. No sound pierces the dense quiet of the room in which time moves forward on the limpid rails of light. The man's attitude is so tense that it seems as if he fears to break the steady course of the sunbeam. As time goes on he seems, if possible, to watch the door more closely. Now the beam of light becoming broader breaks over the stand by the wall and throws a spot of light over the door of the operating room.

In another moment the whole side of the wall is alight. The hour is complete. As the time

for which he was to wait passes, the attitude of the man changes again. He springs from his chair and paces twice across the room with soft steps. Then he suddenly stops and leans against a chair, and as second follows second, his head sinks.

[*There are sounds of motion in the room on the right. The door opens and the* NURSE *comes hurriedly out.*

HUSBAND

Is there anything—?

NURSE

Do not stop me now.

[*She goes out by the centre door.* HUSBAND *watches the door through which she has gone.* NURSE *returns leaving the doors open.*

HUSBAND

[*With greater strength.*] I beg you—

NURSE

[*Impatiently.*] Please! You must wait!

[HUSBAND *steps back.* NURSE *goes out the right door.* HUSBAND *watches this as be-*

fore. Immediately this door is opened and the INTERNE'S *voice is heard.*

INTERNE

Easy now . . . easy. [*To* NURSE.] You go first.

[*Enter the* NURSE *drawing one end of a wheeled cot on which lies a still form under blankets. At the other end enters the* INTERNE *carefully guiding the cot.*

INTERNE

Careful, careful, of this joint. Watch out for the desk. There you go. Easy. That's all right. Hold your end. There's the door.

[HUSBAND *watches silently and as if from a great distance an absorbing drama in which he is permitted to play no part.*

INTERNE

Now. There. All right. I can close the door.

[*They take their burden out by the centre doors and the* INTERNE *closes them behind him. The* HUSBAND *is left in a silence as vast as before but more empty. Enter, through the open door at the right, the*

SURGEON. *He is almost unrecognisable. Dressed in white from head to foot, one trouser leg is crumpled above his shoe, his coat sleeves are drawn up over his wrists, his white skull cap has slipped down over one ear, and the bandage over his mouth has been chewed into a wet rag which covers his lower teeth and gets in the way of his tongue. He is vigorously wiping his hands and wrists with a large towel.*

HUSBAND

[*Compressing all of his questions into the words.*] My wife?

SURGEON

Eh—eh— Oh! [*Removing the rag from his mouth.*] A beautiful operation! Beautiful! She will live.

[HUSBAND *reaches to the high table for support and stands limply nodding his head without speaking.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By William Ellery Leonard

THE PEOPLE OF THE STORY

GLORY OF THE MORNING, The Chevalier's Winnebago squaw

THE CHEVALIER, called the HALF MOON, a nobleman, now an adventurer in the French fur-trade

RED WING, a boy
OAK LEAF, a girl
} Their children

BLACK WOLF, a visionary old medicine-man, not without some homely wisdom

GLORY OF THE MORNING

An Autumn afternoon long ago.

To the left a wigwam. A disused cradle-board. A water jar. A wooden mortar and pestle. A corn shock. A little to the rear and to the right, two sticks with upright forks supporting a cross-bar, from which hangs a copper kettle. To the farthest right a canoe with paddles, drawn up among the rushes from the shore of the inland lake beyond. An oak tree, with its fallen leaves of red and brown strewn about. Two or three boulders. A buffalo skull. Farther to the rear away from the lake-side, glimpses of the rest of the Indian village. After a moment GLORY OF THE MORNING, *a comely Indian woman of thirty, emerges from the wigwam: she pulls an ear of corn from the shock, grinds it, and sifts through her fingers into the kettle; she draws water from the beach for the kettle; she arranges leaves and sticks for*

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the fire; meanwhile humming some low wild notes and stopping at her work to look out over the lake. At last, seating herself on the ground, she continues sewing beads on a buckskin shirt, with a glance now and then far away. After another moment or two, RED WING, *her twelve year old boy, comes running in from behind the wigwam, with bow and quiver and a quarry of squirrels.*

RED WING

[*Throwing down the squirrels.*] Count them, Mother.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Handling.*] One, two, three, four, five, six. Papoose will lead the buffalo hunt.

RED WING

That's more squirrels than any of the other boys got.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The other boys will elect Red Wing little Chief.

RED WING

I made Round Turtle, and Blue Snake, and Crow Tongue go with me; and Rainspot too.

And Rainspot hit only one,—and he's three winters taller than I am.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

This autumn, out gathering sassafras below Acorn Hill, I have seen many squirrels' nests in the bare treetops.

RED WING

But to-day we were not on Acorn Hill. We were other side Wild Rice Cove [*pointing to the left and rear*] in the woods beyond the Big Eagle Mound. And one squirrel sitting on a boulder . . .

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Beyond the Big Eagle . . . the Thunderbird! Black Wolf will scold you.

RED WING

Black Wolf will give me a new bow.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Black Wolf will be angry.

RED WING

Queer old Black Wolf! Forever standing on the Thunderbird and talking to the sunset. Wails

like a wolf. Halloos like a screech owl. But he's forgotten how to shoot.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Continuing with her bead work.*] You laugh too often at the Black Wolf. You must not. He sees visions. He speaks to the Manitou. He is wise. He knows what was and what is to be.

RED WING

But Black Wolf won't find out where I got them, if Rainspot or somebody doesn't tell him.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I don't know. He is wise.

RED WING

He can't shoot, but he can tell stories.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I know you like him.

RED WING

I like his stories.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

He told your mother a new story this morning.

RED WING

[*Dropping to the ground.*] I am listening, Mother.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

But perhaps I'm not going to tell it.

RED WING

Then I'll ask Black Wolf.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

It will make your eyes big.

RED WING

Is it about the Chippewa?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

No.

RED WING

He has found out who stole the war-club of Grandfather Big Canoe!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

No.

RED WING

It is about you.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

It is a story I have long waited to hear.

RED WING

There he goes—there he comes again!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Startled and expectant.*] Who?

RED WING

The lame rabbit that got out of my trap yesterday.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You must listen. It's a very short story.

RED WING

Tell it then, quick.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Red Wing, Black Wolf's new story says that your father comes back to-day from the Frenchman's town by the Big River.

RED WING

The Half Moon comes back?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

He comes back.

RED WING

That's not like the stories Black Wolf tells *me.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Are you not glad?

RED WING

Yes.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The Half Moon will be proud of his son and the squirrels. He will put his hand on your shoulder. He will pay you six iron arrow-heads for the skins.

RED WING

Iron arrow-heads. Six iron arrow-heads.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes.

RED WING

Mother, I don't like the iron arrow-heads that father always brings back to the village.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Many of the young braves like them. They don't break or nick. They are strong and sharp.

RED WING

[*Standing up.*] But the Winnebago didn't make them. They are not real arrow-heads.

They didn't grow from the rocks in the Yellow Ridge.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Where did you learn those thoughts?

RED WING

I am a Winnebago.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You are talking like Grandfather Big Canoe.

RED WING

Besides they are bad medicine. They are to blame for the blackbirds eating up the wild rice this summer.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

And now you talk like Black Wolf.

RED WING

Nobody shall bind father's arrow-heads into the ends of the shafts in *my* quiver, Mother. I will kill squirrels and deer and buffalo with these points of flint.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Where did you get them?

RED WING

Grandfather Big Canoe taught me how to chip them with the bone flaker.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Your Grandfather Big Canoe has taught you many things, hasn't he?

RED WING

More than the Half Moon.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Your father is busier than Grandfather Big Canoe, and must go to the white man's land.

RED WING

[*Dropping down again.*] Mother, Black Wolf says Father is a squaw-man. What is . . .

GLORY OF THE MORNING

See, Red Wing, the Half Moon's new buckskin shirt is almost done. He will put it on this very day and you will clap your hands.

RED WING

What is a squaw-man?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Putting her hand on his head.*] Papoose, won't you be glad to see your father again after these long, long months at the Big River?

RED WING

Where is the Big River?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Walking and pointing out into the lake.*] Far away beyond the Four Lakes, beyond the Nippising and the rapids of the Ottawa, far away beyond the Hunting-grounds and the forests of the Huron, nearly to the Big Sea Water and the Morning Star. It is very far away.

RED WING

I wish Father would stay home and fight the Chippewa.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The Half Moon has to visit his friends and sell his skins. [*Cheerily.*] But to-day he . . .

RED WING

[*Heedlessly.*] What is a squaw-man?

[*Enter from the side toward the lake* OAK LEAF, *the thirteen year old daughter, fol-*

lowed by BLACK WOLF, *who carries a calumet on which he has been binding the sacred eagle-feathers, dyed in yellow and scarlet.*

OAK LEAF

Mother, Mother, Mother!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Busy at the half-built fire.*] Well, Oak Leaf?

OAK LEAF

I know something!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes.

OAK LEAF

Black Wolf had a dream last night.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes.

OAK LEAF

Father is coming home before the stars.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Silly child, I know.

OAK LEAF

O do you know too!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Don't you suppose I've had Black Wolf for a friend ever so much longer than you have? He whispers me many of his secrets. He told me two hours ago that the Half Moon was coming home.

OAK LEAF

And will he bring me presents?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes.

OAK LEAF

O the red cloth he promised me!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes.

OAK LEAF

And the blue beads and the little shining bangles!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes.

OAK LEAF

On a golden cord, Mother!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You want to see him almost as much as your mother does.

OAK LEAF

O more, Mother Glory of the Morning! And I know he wants to see Oak Leaf.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

More too than he wants to see Glory of the Morning?

OAK LEAF

How should I know!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Oak Leaf, when the father loves the daughter, the mother is made glad.

OAK LEAF

But Mother, won't the maidens be jealous at the next Dance-of-the-Virgins—and sorry for their buckskin skirts and their snail shell necklaces! O how fine I'll be!

RED WING

The maidens won't like you.

OAK LEAF

[*Running up and pushing him over where he sits.*] But won't the braves come staring round the lodge, Red Wing! [*She turns with dancing steps.*] Look at me, Black Wolf. Am I not the

pretty one, Half Moon's lovely daughter! [*Pretending.*] No, not too near, old medicine-man!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

But Oak Leaf, have you anything for him? Red Wing's just brought home six squirrels.

OAK LEAF

[*Jumping down on her knees.*] O the plump little puppies! I will dress them for the feast of his coming home. [*Teasing.*] Black Wolf will help.

BLACK WOLF

[*With dignity.*] Oak Leaf, Black Wolf is not a squaw.

OAK LEAF

[*Mocking.*] Black Wolf, Oak Leaf is not a medicine-man.

BLACK WOLF

Black Wolf will never do a squaw's work. You like too well to play the white woman when you are happy.

OAK LEAF

Old Moose! Anyway come and sit down by me.

[BLACK WOLF *seats himself on a boulder*

near OAK LEAF *and is busy with arranging the feathers on the bowl of his calumet.* RED WING *sprawls at full length on his back with his hands behind his head.* GLORY OF THE MORNING *sits again at her bead work with the shirt in her lap.*

BLACK WOLF

Oak Leaf, the young braves will not come to sing before the wigwam if you treat them as you treat Black Wolf.

RED WING

Sister Oak Leaf, you are going to marry Rainspot.

OAK LEAF

Yes.

RED WING

When?

OAK LEAF

When the pines turn yellow and the sumach-berries white and the wild rice grows in the moon. [*Disdainfully.*] Rainspot!

[GLORY OF THE MORNING *walks toward the water.*

RED WING

Rainspot hurled the ice-arrow on the lake farther than I could last year. But I'll beat him this winter.

OAK LEAF

[*Rolling with a quick wild grace.*] Rainspot! —I'll tell you who I'll marry.

RED WING

Who?

OAK LEAF

I will marry Pierre, the trader.

RED WING

He doesn't want you.

OAK LEAF

[*Throwing a twig at* RED WING.] Yes he does. Whenever he comes over to the village from the Panther Woods after rice and corn and maple sugar, he gives me ribbons and says funny things to me in the white man's tongue. Father told me what they meant once.

RED WING

The dogs don't like Pierre. They snap at his heels as soon as he beaches his canoe. I don't like him either.

OAK LEAF

But he's a Frenchman, a fur-trader, like Father.

RED WING

[*Turning over, with palm on chin.*] Black Wolf, what is a squaw-man? Why did Mother . . .

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Returning.*] Black Wolf, I fear your visions sometimes fail. We do not see the Half Moon's canoe. I am not so sure that the Half Moon is coming back to-day.

OAK LEAF

But he is! He is! I had a dream too—O, what did I dream? I dreamed I saw him in the white man's coat with the gleaming buttons, and a long, long knife in a narrow quiver swinging from a belt on his left side, like the Frenchman who lived in our lodge, at the time of the last Bird Dance.

RED WING

And used to grin when Mother Glory of the Morning scolded him for kissing you.

BLACK WOLF

Did you dream that?

OAK LEAF

Yes.

BLACK WOLF

Oak Leaf, I don't like your dreams.

OAK LEAF

Why? Won't Father come back?

BLACK WOLF

The Half Moon comes back before the rising stars. Black Wolf knows.

OAK LEAF

I only dream after you, Black Wolf—just for fun.

RED WING

[*Again sprawling on his back.*] I know what a squaw-man is. Grandfather Big Canoe told me. It was last year at the falling of the leaves when the braves were out on the warpath of the Chippewa. Rainspot and Crow Tongue began calling me squaw-man's papoose, because Half Moon had been way off in the white man's town again—

through all the months-of-the-green-growing-corn, and hadn't come back yet.

OAK LEAF

What did Grandfather Big Canoe say?

RED WING

Grandfather Big Canoe said: "A squaw-man is a Pale Face playing Indian for the bear and beaver and buffalo skins he can get from the real Indians to send back over the Big Sea Water."

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Your grandfather was cruel. He knows why I married the Half Moon.

OAK LEAF

O Mother, he married you because you were the glory of the morning, and as beautiful as Oak Leaf.

BLACK WOLF

[*Standing.*] He married you because we had lost so many of the young men in the wars with the Chippewa and thought we needed to be friends with the white men. Chief Big Canoe exchanged the Wampum bead-belts. Red Wing, do you know what the three long purple lines across the wampum mean?

RED WING

[*Sitting up.*] They mean that the roads are open between the two tribes.

BLACK WOLF

Yes, that the roads are open. Chief Big Canoe gave the Half Moon his daughter that the roads might be open between the Indian and the white man. But when I speak to him about it to-day, he bows his head.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

And comes no more to visit the wigwam of his daughter.

BLACK WOLF

But the Half Moon rejoiced in the open roads. And a wigwam among the Winnebago has filled his pack with the wealth of the Indian Hunting-grounds.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Black Wolf, you are all cruel; you do not understand. The men sold me to the Half Moon. The Half Moon bought me. Then I worked for the Half Moon; I laid the dead fish in the corn hills and planted the seed, and brought the ears home for him to eat; from the spring I drew the

water for him to drink; I shook from the bended reeds the grains of the wild rice into my canoe for him; for him I pounded the buffalo meat and dried it and pressed it and laid it away in a skin against the coming of the snow; at the lodge I built the fire to warm him through the winter and sewed him his shirts and his moccasins. I gave him children. He needed me. But now the Half Moon is more needful to Glory of the Morning than Glory of the Morning is to the Half Moon.

BLACK WOLF

All the village knows you have been a good squaw.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Besides Black Wolf is a medicine-man. He remembers old stories of the animal earthworks of our forefathers, and he sees visions. But he cannot understand a squaw's heart. And Red Wing is still a child. Do you understand a squaw's heart, Oak Leaf?

OAK LEAF

Haven't I one, just like you?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Lifting the girl's white hand.*] I wonder . . . perhaps.

RED WING

But Mother, I'm not a child.

BLACK WOLF

Black Wolf knew that a squaw's heart would beat to hear that the Half Moon comes back to-day.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

That was good. [*Walking and looking out over the lake.*] Where is he? He has always come crossing the long arm of the lake around Bear Island [*pointing*] from Pierre's block-house in the Panther Woods. How many times I have sat here and seen him paddling home at last. The sun is nearly set.

BLACK WOLF

You are a woman. You care most for your own wigwam. I do understand. But you do not understand Black Wolf. You think you believe his stories and visions; but you do not—unless they are about the Half Moon or your own wigwam. That is the way with the squaws.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Who made me a squaw?—The Great Spirit made me a squaw.

BLACK WOLF

Ah, what does it matter to you? You have forgotten. You have forgotten the days of our strength, when a thousand braves built the Great Mound of the Eagle, the Thunderbird, at the . . .

RED WING

O tell us about the thousand braves!

OAK LEAF

[*Mockingly playful.*] Do, wise old Black Wolf—and why you are always standing out there alone in the dusk.

BLACK WOLF

[*With the large mien of his full barbaric height.* RED WING *now sits facing him, more and more intent, with back to you and me.*] The Great Thunderbird at the ancient festival in the days when the clan still knew the swift Eagle as its father. You have forgotten that. His spirit dwelt there for twenty generations of warriors. Now that spirit is fled. The place is a heap of dead earth. The woods hide it. The autumn

leaves fall upon it. Every spring the melting snow washes it bit by bit away. And the woodchucks make their holes in it. Again and again I go to call the Eagle Spirit back to its old dwelling place. But the Great Eagle Mound is dead. The children of the Winnebago go thither to hunt the squirrel.

RED WING

Six fat ones, Black Wolf. How . . . how did you know?

BLACK WOLF

[*Continuing to* GLORY OF THE MORNING.] The eyes of the squaws cannot look back into the shadows. You all turn towards the east. Toward the road of the white men. You like their trinkets—their red cloth, their lead spoons, their tinkling bangles. [*Pointing with the calumet.*] You boil Indian meat in the copper kettles of the white men. [*Pointing with the calumet to the shirt on the ground.*] You sew the white man's beads on the Indian's shirt.

OAK LEAF

[*Interrupting.*] But the shirt that Mother makes for Father is a white man's shirt.

BLACK WOLF

[*Continuing.*] You destroy the hearts of the braves. They do nothing but trap the beaver and give the skins away for the white man's iron tomahawks. They forget the cunning of their fathers. They cannot peck the stone with the flint and polish to an edge with the sandstone in water, and bind with the buck-thongs to the ashen handle, like the old men.

RED WING

Grandfather Big Canoe is going to teach me.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Near the kettle, turning.*] Won't the white man's tomahawk cleave the skull of the Chippewa?

BLACK WOLF

Never, never in the hand of the Winnebago. The Great Spirit says every people must hold the war-weapon of its own handicraft. When it loses its cunning to make, it must lose its power to fight.

RED WING

But the iron tomahawk is not the white man's war-weapon.

BLACK WOLF

No; he makes it to steal with. We have seen the white man's weapon—and the Half Moon's magic smoke-tube has spoken even here to the wild geese far up in the cold blue sky ere the ice was gone from the lake. But should it speak at Black Wolf, Black Wolf would fall forward on his face, and the life would depart out of his eyes forever.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You must not say that . . . the Half Moon calls Black Wolf brother.

BLACK WOLF

And the young braves drink at the feasts no more the maple sap and the juice of the wild grape since they have tasted the Frenchman's fire-water.

OAK LEAF

I have tasted the fire-water, Black Wolf. It is good for the heart.

BLACK WOLF

They lay on the spirit-stones of the Manitou not now the old offerings of goldenrod and sunflower, but the red ribbons of the white men in the wind.

OAK LEAF

I should think the Great Spirit would love the bright ribbons more than the flowers that fester and wither away.

BLACK WOLF

They will sometime lay there the white man's tobacco. But in the council the old men will never smoke the white man's tobacco in Black Wolf's calumet. [*Holding up the ceremonial pipe.*

RED WING

When I am an old man, I will never smoke the white man's tobacco in Black Wolf's calumet.

BLACK WOLF

I believe you, boy.—And the white man's medicine-man has made, like the hunter and trader, his paths through the forests and streams. I met him long ago at Montreal, the town by the Big River. He wore wide black robes and a little black hat. He stopped. He held his silver medicine charm up to my eyes and mumbled his magic words and tried to bewitch Black Wolf away from the Great Spirit. The Charm was shaped like this. [*Makes in the air with his calumet the sign of the cross.*

RED WING

Show us again.

BLACK WOLF

Like this. [*Puts left hand horizontally across stem of calumet held vertically in right hand.*] It is called a cross.

RED WING

A cross! The white man's medicine-man stole the Indian's sign of the Earth-Maker!

BLACK WOLF

It was shaped like the Indian sign of the Earth-Maker; but the sign of the Earth-Maker it was not indeed. It was the white man's totem. I saw it on the top of their Big Medicine Lodge where the bell rings at the sunrise. That is the totem that makes the white men strong.

RED WING

How does it make them strong?

BLACK WOLF

The white men put their bearded lips upon it, and the white women wear it on the bosoms that nurse the white men's children.

RED WING

What does that do?

BLACK WOLF

Black Wolf is wise in the history of his people; the lore of the white men he will not learn. But ten summers after, it was that medicine-man who came to the village and took Half Moon and Glory of the Morning, with the two little papooses, out before the lodge and married them over again in the white man's way—and he had again the white man's totem in his hand.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Sitting again to her sewing.*] Black Wolf, the Pere La Rou was kind. He played with my babies down there on the sand.

BLACK WOLF

Glory of the Morning, three years before that, the village danced the Dance-of-the-Calumet at your wedding. Myself I stood in the midst and pointed with the calumet to the four skies.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

And I was so happy. I was indeed the glory of the morning then.

OAK LEAF

O if I had only been there, Mother!

BLACK WOLF

Good will not come forever to the Indian who is married in the white man's way.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Black Wolf, you must not longer remind me of that. My husband wished it.

RED WING

Tell me why he wished it.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I am not ashamed. Black Wolf, it was because he loved his children. It brought him no gain, no more skins than before. They say the other traders run away from their Indian children, because Frenchmen think in their hearts that marriage in the Indian way does not bind the white man, when the white man grows weary. He asked me to come before the Pere La Rou. A squaw must obey her husband. That is the Indian way too.

BLACK WOLF

Good will not come forever to the Indian who is married in the white man's way.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Black Wolf, how strange you are. You have seen not gladly the Indian's skins in the Half Moon's pack when he goes forth, nor the white man's presents in the Half Moon's pack when he returns. But to the Half Moon himself often and often you have given your right hand. You are good; you told me he was coming back to-day.

BLACK WOLF

He is coming back—yet even when he shall be gone forever, the young braves will still let the white man give new names to the hills and the springs and the rivers and the trees. [*Pause.*] Many years has Black Wolf seen the autumn haze stealing nearer and nearer over the old Hunting-grounds of our people; many years has Black Wolf listened to stories, as he counted the falling of the leaves. But the young braves and the squaws laugh at my dreams. Last night, when the camp-fires were low before the hundred lodges, and deep sleep was on the dogs, and there was no sound but the dropping of the acorns and the splash of the waves on the beach, Black Wolf saw the Half Moon coming back. He has told you. True, but then the dream changed. [*More*

solemnly.] It seemed to be at the time of the Evening Star. Over the village hung a huge yellow cloud. Shaped like the Great Eagle Mound of our people. And a mighty wind blew in heaven. And the cloud was driven to the west. And the wings—

[*Enter* THE CHEVALIER *from the trail, dressed like a trapper with pack and gun, but wearing a military jacket and cap.* GLORY OF THE MORNING *sees him first, and jumping up with a cry buries her head on his shoulder.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Half Moon!

[*He gently releases himself and takes her by the right hand. She still has the buckskin shirt in her left.*

THE CHEVALIER

It seems good to see you again, Glory of the Morning.

[*The children have jumped up. As he turns to embrace them, she stands puzzled, suspicious, and hurt, and withdraws a little toward* RED WING.

OAK LEAF

O Father, Black Wolf said you would come to-day.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Loosening gun and packs from his shoulders.*] I have come back to Oak Leaf to-day.

OAK LEAF

O I'm so glad.

[*She takes care of her father's gun and packs.*

THE CHEVALIER

[*Shaking hands with* BLACK WOLF.] Greetings, Black Wolf. I know you've been taking good care of Oak Leaf. [*Turning to* RED WING.] You scamp, come here.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

We've been watching for your canoe over the water all the long afternoon.

THE CHEVALIER

I took the North Elk Trail from Bisonnette's trading-post. Bisonnette sends greetings to you, Black Wolf. He wants to be friends with the Black Wolf. [*Putting forth an arm to snatch* RED WING.] Come here, I say. Have you kept

the Half Moon's wigwam stocked with fish and game for Oak Leaf?

[RED WING *avoids his father's arm.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Pointing to the squirrels.*] Red Wing has done his morning's work.

THE CHEVALIER

You are a mighty hunter. The white men will want to send you to shoot the buffalo for them along the banks of the Wisconsin.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Why do you come thus, Half Moon?—like . . . like a Frenchman.

THE CHEVALIER

O this gay shirt! Why, I've been putting on the white man's war paint and feathers. [*Turning to* RED WING.] And how many squirrels did you get?

RED WING

[*Shortly.*] Six, Half Moon.

THE CHEVALIER

Half Moon!—you rascal, you have forgotten altogether to be my son.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The white man's war paint—but the roads are open. There is the white man's peace in the country of the Four Lakes.

THE CHEVALIER

The Four Lakes is not the world.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

It is our world.

THE CHEVALIER

Yes, and I will not jest. I thought you would like it. I put it on partly to celebrate my coming home.

BLACK WOLF

The Half Moon wishes to astonish the Indian eyes with the glory of the white man.

THE CHEVALIER

That's it too, Black Wolf.

BLACK WOLF

[*Striding off with folded arms toward the waters in the background.*] Black Wolf is not astonished.

OAK LEAF

O Mother's afraid of Father in his new dress. I think it's gorgeous as the rising sun. [*Counting the buttons.*] One, two, three, four, five . . . my! give me that one!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You say you took the North Elk Trail . . . you never did before.

THE CHEVALIER

No, never before.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Next time I will take the children and watch from Acorn Hill.

THE CHEVALIER

But indeed I never will come by the North Elk Trail again.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I am glad; you know how often I've waited for you over the lake. That is why you let me set up the wigwam off here from the long-houses of the village.

THE CHEVALIER

But I had business to close with Bisonnette.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Half Moon, I too wanted to celebrate your home-coming. Put on the new buckskin shirt.

[*She holds it up.*

THE CHEVALIER

[*Sitting down on a stone.*] Deft fingers made that embroidery.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The fingers of Glory of the Morning.

THE CHEVALIER

But I can't wear it to-night.

BLACK WOLF

[*Seated by the waters, scarcely turning his head.*] The Half Moon will celebrate his return to the Indian country by wearing the white man's coat . . . for the roads are open.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The one night of all nights it would please me to see it on you, Half Moon.

THE CHEVALIER

I'd like to please you, Glory of the Morning . . . indeed I would.

OAK LEAF

Anyway, I like you better in the white man's shirt; Red Wing does too.

RED WING

[*To* Oak Leaf *and* Black Wolf.] Yes. The buckskin of the Winnebago is for the shoulders of the Winnebago.

[*He squats and begins chipping two stones on each other with right and left fist.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*On a knee.*] Half Moon, put on the buckskin shirt to-night.

THE CHEVALIER

I cannot. The Frenchman who travels in the war-dress given him by his King dare not put it off till his work is done.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You are making a white man's jest.

THE CHEVALIER

No. [*Rising.*] I must paddle over to Pierre's block-house, Pierre's little jack-knife trading-post, in the Panther Woods to-night.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You have messages for Pierre from the white man's town?

THE CHEVALIER

And business to close and a bundle of ribbons and jewels for him.

OAK LEAF

And some for me too. You promised.

THE CHEVALIER

Some for Oak Leaf too.

OAK LEAF

[*Reaching for his things.*] O let me see them now.

THE CHEVALIER

They are in with Pierre's packages. To-morrow will be time enough.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

We will watch in the morning as you paddle back, and pretend that you hadn't come to-day.

THE CHEVALIER

You need not watch in the morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

We will watch, as to-day, in the afternoon.

THE CHEVALIER

You need not watch in the afternoon.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Our eyes will follow the canoe as it comes gliding back on the shining path of the rising moon.

THE CHEVALIER

It will not come back with the rising moon.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Not even with the rising moon?

BLACK WOLF

[*Significantly from his seat in the background by the waters.*] His canoe will not come back with the rising moon.

THE CHEVALIER

[*With determination, taking her hand not unkindly.*] Glory of the Morning, I fear I shan't paddle back to-morrow.

OAK LEAF

But my ribbons and jewels, Father?

THE CHEVALIER

You shall have them.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Glory of the Morning has learned how to wait. I will watch the day after.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Still holding her hand.*] No—nor the day after.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Withdrawing her hand.*] Then . . . then I must wait in the snowdrifts and the north wind while you are gone again to the town by the Big River . . . gone all the wild winter.

THE CHEVALIER

[*With a touch of feeling.*] All winter, Glory of the Morning, and all summer.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

All winter and all summer—until the autumn leaves fall again.

THE CHEVALIER

I think I shall not be back when the autumn leaves fall.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Is . . . is that good-bye, Half Moon?

THE CHEVALIER

I must take the white man's road again, Glory of the Morning.

BLACK WOLF

Take the white man's road—the road is open.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

When the Half Moon is weary of the prettier squaw among the white women in the town by the Big River, he will come back to Glory of the Morning.

THE CHEVALIER

You need not be jealous, Glory of the Morning. That is not it.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I am not jealous. I love Half Moon.

THE CHEVALIER

My life with the tribe of the Four Lakes is done.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Done?

THE CHEVALIER

The barter is over.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Quietly.*] The old wigwam was only a place for barter.

THE CHEVALIER

And my business in the town by the Big River is done too: I shall not trade any more skins.

RED WING

Nor iron tomahawks!

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Neither in the country of the Four Lakes nor in the town by the Big River.

THE CHEVALIER

I am going back over the Big Sea Water.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Half to herself.*] Over the Big Sea Water is beyond the Morning Star.

THE CHEVALIER

I have liked this wild life.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You have returned singing to the country of the Four Lakes many autumns.

THE CHEVALIER

But one cannot sing forever. New duties have suddenly come to the Chevalier.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

New duties?

THE CHEVALIER

My father has died. The great house where I was born and grew up now belongs to me. And there is fighting in my country, and I have to lay aside the buckskin shirt for this white man's war-coat. The Great King calls me home.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Home . . . home beyond the Morning Star.

BLACK WOLF

[*Rising, but remaining in the background by the waters.*] Where the Great Spirit gave lakes and hills to the white race—even as he gave these lakes and hills to the Winnebago.

THE CHEVALIER

[*To* GLORY OF THE MORNING.] I've grown fond of these lakes and hills . . . fond of the old wigwam and you.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You have lived here many winters.

THE CHEVALIER

Many pleasant winters; but you need not work for me any longer, Glory of the Morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

To have the Half Moon to work for has been like the sun and the air.

THE CHEVALIER

I fear it was, after all, only a piece of me that belonged here.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

It was enough for Glory of the Morning.

THE CHEVALIER

There is no help for it. There is more to a man's life than a woman—you must try to understand.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

A squaw cannot understand. That's what they both say—the man of the Pale Faces and the man of the Winnebago.

OAK LEAF

O Father, you must take Red Wing and me with you beyond the Big Sea Water. Take Mother too.

THE CHEVALIER

[*To* Oak Leaf.] No, Oak Leaf, your mother would not be very happy, I think, over there in the big stone lodge, the Chevalier's chateau, with its high towers and its wide rooms and its long halls.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I would sweep it.

THE CHEVALIER

[*To* Glory of the Morning.] But it's longer than the long-houses of the Winnebago; taller than the Half Moon's wigwam; wider than Pierre's block-house over yonder—too big for Glory of the Morning to sweep.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I would boil the buffalo meat, and scour the wooden bowls and the lead spoons.

THE CHEVALIER

Thirty braves will often eat in the hall with the Chevalier. And yet not one will ever taste the buffalo meat, nor ever hold the wooden bowl between his knees nor the lead spoon in his hand.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I would pull the weeds from round the door.

THE CHEVALIER

But you could not trim the shrubs in the parks and scatter the gravel on the garden paths and clean the marble basin of the fountain and burnish the brazen lamp before the gate.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You have often told me of the fountain and the brazen lamp. But some one must plant the corn and gather the wild rice.

THE CHEVALIER

The braves in the country of the Great King do not let their wives plant the corn—and the wild

rice does not grow in the country of the Great King.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I would sew the shirt.

[*Half pleadingly she holds up the buckskin shirt.*

THE CHEVALIER

But I could not wear it either before the braves, or the grand ladies, or the Great King.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

There would be nothing for me to do.

THE CHEVALIER

Nothing. And you would not be happy with the grand ladies.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

No.

THE CHEVALIER

Because they would smile at your pretty brown arms and brown neck.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

And the Chevalier would not be pleased.

THE CHEVALIER

Indeed, I would not.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The woman of the Winnebago will never be mocked by the squaws in the country of the Great King.

THE CHEVALIER

You are proud and strong. I knew you wouldn't cry like the other squaws.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

No. The daughter of Big Canoe will not cry.

THE CHEVALIER

Yet I've been dreading this hour. It hurts me too, Glory of the Morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

But you have obeyed the Great King.

THE CHEVALIER

I have obeyed the Great King.

BLACK WOLF

Black Wolf has known that the Half Moon would some day hear voices calling from beyond the Big Sea Water.

RED WING

[*Rising.*] Bid him take Pierre, the trapper. Let them gather up the iron tomahawks from the

village and give them back to the Great King.

[*He turns his back on* THE CHEVALIER.

BLACK WOLF

There would come another Pierre, and yet another. The Half Moon goes, but the winds will blow evermore out of the east.

OAK LEAF

Father, Father Half Moon, the Great King shall not take you away from Oak Leaf.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*To the children.*] The Great King knows not nor cares that I gave him Oak Leaf and Red Wing.

THE CHEVALIER

He shall know.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

It would matter nothing to him.

THE CHEVALIER

I will tell him that you were their mother.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

He would not bid you return to your children.

THE CHEVALIER

No. But he will be good to the children.

OAK LEAF

He will send us presents from over the Big Sea Water—a scarlet dress for Oak Leaf, a long shining knife with jewels for Red Wing.

THE CHEVALIER

Yes. He will give you presents.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The children will not need his presents, Half Moon.

THE CHEVALIER

Let the children decide that, Glory of the Morning.

RED WING

Let the Great King keep his long shining knife.

BLACK WOLF

The Great King will send no presents.

THE CHEVALIER

Surely, for the sake of Half Moon, his friend, and the father of the Half Moon's children.

BLACK WOLF

[*Advancing a step.*] The white man gives no presents to the Indians, except for the sake of gain, and the Great King wants not the friendship of the young children of the Winnebago.

THE CHEVALIER

You do not know the goodness of the Great King.

BLACK WOLF

[*Striding gravely toward him.*] Half Moon, you go—then, go like a man. Talk straight into the Indian's eyes. Say good-bye to the Indian squaw—and the Indian children. Say good-bye to Black Wolf. Then turn your back on the Four Lakes and go like a man.

THE CHEVALIER

Brother Black Wolf, go like a man?

BLACK WOLF

Yes, and tell no white man's lies to ease the Indian heart.

THE CHEVALIER

I speak the truth. The Great King will give presents to the children of Glory of the Morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

You think that you cannot forget Glory of the Morning when beyond the Big Sea Water.

THE CHEVALIER

The children will keep me from forgetting.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*With a voice that is no echo of his.*] The children will keep me from forgetting.

THE CHEVALIER

I shall be glad to think so.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

But not even presents from the Great King will keep them from forgetting the Half Moon.

THE CHEVALIER

They will not forget him.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Perhaps not . . . if their mother can open her lips to speak to them of him.

THE CHEVALIER

Glory of the Morning, I will take care of the children.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Take care of the children?

THE CHEVALIER

I will take care of the children. They are both young. They can learn.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

They can learn?

THE CHEVALIER

Oak Leaf is already more than half a white girl; and Red Wing is half white in blood, if not in manners—*ça ira.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Beginning to realise.*] No, no. They are mine!

THE CHEVALIER

[*Reaching out his arms to take them.*] No.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

They are mine, they are mine!

THE CHEVALIER

The Great King will give them presents.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

No, no!

THE CHEVALIER

He will lay his hands on their heads.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

He shall not, he shall not!

THE CHEVALIER

I have said that I will tell him you were their mother.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I am their mother—I *am* their mother.

THE CHEVALIER

And he will praise Glory of the Morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

They are mine, they are mine!

THE CHEVALIER

I have come to take them back with me over the Big Sea Water.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*The buckskin shirt falls from her hands as she spreads her arms and steps between him and her children.*] No, no, no! They are not yours! They are mine! The long pains were mine! Their food at the breast was mine! Year after

year while you were away so long, long, long, I clothed them, I watched them, I taught them to speak the tongue of my people. All that they are is mine, mine, mine!

THE CHEVALIER

[*Drawing* OAK LEAF *to him and holding up her bare arm.*] Is that an Indian skin? Where did that colour come from? I'm giving you the white man's law.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Struggling with the* CHEVALIER.] I do not know the white man's law. And I do not know how their skin borrowed the white man's colour. But I know that their little bodies came out of my own body—my own body. They must be mine, they shall be mine, they are mine!

[*The* CHEVALIER *throws her aside so that she falls.*

THE CHEVALIER

Glory of the Morning, the Great Spirit said long before you were born that a man has a right to his own children. The Great Spirit made woman so that she should bring him children. Black Wolf, is it not so?

BLACK WOLF

It is so.

THE CHEVALIER

[*To* GLORY OF THE MORNING, *standing apart.*] Black Wolf is the wise man of your people.

BLACK WOLF

And knows the Great Spirit better than the white men.

THE CHEVALIER

Indeed, I think so.

BLACK WOLF

And the Great Spirit made the man so that he should stay with the squaw who brought him the children,—except when off hunting meat for the wigwam or on the warpath for the tribe.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*With some spirit and dignity.*] The white man Half Moon has said that he believes Black Wolf.

THE CHEVALIER

The white man has not come to argue with the Red Skin, but to take the white man's children.

BLACK WOLF

[*In his rôle of practical wisdom.*] The Half Moon will listen to Black Wolf.

THE CHEVALIER

[*With conciliation.*] If the Black Wolf speaks wisely.

BLACK WOLF

Half Moon, Red Wing and Oak Leaf have grown up with the birch tree and the wild rose. They have played the moccasin game before the wigwam with the children of the village. They have caught the frogs and the turtles on the rocks in the cove. They have paddled the canoe in the sun through the rice stalks and the flag leaves. And under the full moon they have heard the singing of the whippoorwill. They have kissed Glory of the Morning, and listened to Black Wolf's stories.

THE CHEVALIER

I can tell them stories.

BLACK WOLF

Their roots are deep in the black earth of their Winnebago home. They have grown tall under the rainbow, under the warm and glittering show-

ers of the Winnebago skies. And the snows of the Four Lakes have made them hardy, and the winds have made them free.

THE CHEVALIER

The day draws toward evening, Black Wolf.

BLACK WOLF

Neither Oak Leaf nor Red Wing is a mere papoose to be snatched from the mother's back.

THE CHEVALIER

The Half Moon shares Black Wolf's pride in the Half Moon's children.

BLACK WOLF

[*Pointing to the discarded cradle-board.*] The mother long since loosened the thongs that bound them to the cradle-board, propped against the wigwam.

THE CHEVALIER

And when she unbound the thongs of the cradle-board, they learned to run toward their father.

BLACK WOLF

But invisible thongs may now bind them round, which even the Half Moon might not break, with-

out rending the flesh from their bones and preparing sorrows and cares for his head.

THE CHEVALIER

Let us have done, Black Wolf.

BLACK WOLF

Thongs which none could break, unless Oak Leaf and Red Wing themselves should first unbind them. [*To the children.*] Will Oak Leaf, will Red Wing unbind the mystic thongs of clan and home? Let the children decide.

THE CHEVALIER

Black Wolf is wise. My children are babes no longer. They can think and speak.

BLACK WOLF

Let them speak.

THE CHEVALIER

They know who has brought them good gifts from White Man's Land and romped with them on the buffalo robe many a winter morning. They know who can make them happy.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes, I could not romp with them all the morning—for the Half Moon had to be fed. I could

not make them many gifts—for the Half Moon had to be clothed.

THE CHEVALIER

Glory of the Morning, I've been good to you —I never beat you, as Big Canoe used to beat your mother—I never played with the other squaws in the village, like Little Turtle or Speckled Snake. And I want to part fairly. Black Wolf is right. Let the children decide.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Yes. [*With a voice that is no echo of his.*] Let the children decide.

BLACK WOLF

Oak Leaf, do you want to leave Black Wolf and Glory of the Morning to go with Half Moon over the Big Sea Water?

OAK LEAF

[*Looking up at her mother.*] O *do* I, Mother?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

I cannot tell. I love you, Oak Leaf.

OAK LEAF

[*Withdrawing toward her father.*] Mother, make Father Half Moon take you with us too.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The Half Moon has told you that he no longer needs Glory of the Morning.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Taking* OAK LEAF'S *hand caressingly.*] Oak Leaf, you are too beautiful to wither and wrinkle here digging and grinding and stitching, though the handsomest brave of the Winnebago bought you for his squaw. Beyond the Big Sea Water you won't have to dig and grind and stitch. And sometime a noble brave of my nation will come in a blue suit with gold braid to the chateau and say: "I love Oak Leaf; will you give Oak Leaf to me?"

OAK LEAF

[*Gladly.*] And you'll give me to him, Father!

THE CHEVALIER

If he promises you all that I bid him.

OAK LEAF

You will bid him to do many good things for Oak Leaf.

THE CHEVALIER

Yes. To give you fine dresses, and necklaces, with festivals and dances, and to be always wise and gentle.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

My daughter, Black Wolf has told us that good will not come forever to the Indian who is married in the white man's way.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Petting her hand.*] This hand, which your father will sometime put into the hand of a brave in the country of the Great King, is not the hand of an Indian. And it is too soft and pretty for the rude lands of the wild rice. [*Drawing her.*] Come, child.

[OAK LEAF *leans against her father, with a half frightened glance at* GLORY OF THE MORNING.

THE CHEVALIER

You see, Glory of the Morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*With restraint.*] I will say good-bye to Oak Leaf.

BLACK WOLF

Red Wing, are you going with your sister and with Half Moon over the Big Sea Water?

RED WING

Sister, *are* you really going?—You are always making believe.

OAK LEAF

O Father,—tell him.

THE CHEVALIER

She is going, Red Wing.

RED WING

There is nothing for me beyond the Big Sea Water.

THE CHEVALIER

Over there your father is a famous chief, and you might wear a sword and fight beside the Great King.

RED WING

I shall not fight beside the Great King; and I shall not wear the white man's sword.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Takes his arm, coaxingly.*] Little chief, why not?—why not, my son?

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Coldly and firmly.*] Because he is *my* son.

RED WING

[*Standing off; to the* CHEVALIER *with boyish pride.*] Because I am a Winnebago.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Almost angry.*] You are going to come with me. [*Almost forgetting that those to whom he speaks are in the Indian world.*] You are my heir—the son of my house and my line.

BLACK WOLF

[*Intercepting, as* THE CHEVALIER *starts to pull the boy by the arm.*] Half Moon, let the boy choose.

THE CHEVALIER

Black Wolf, you are wise. You have seen what the white men are. Make the lad know his own good. What you have called the thongs of clan and home will but bind him to the dead. His mother's people can be nothing to him.

BLACK WOLF

I know what the white men are; I know what the Winnebago have been. Red Wing, I will finish the dream I was telling as the Half Moon, like a stranger, came upon us. It seemed to be at the time of the Evening Star. Over the vil-

lage hung a huge yellow cloud. Shaped like the great Eagle Mound, the Thunderbird of our people. And a mighty wind blew in heaven. And the Thunderbird cloud was driven to the west. And the wings were torn away. And then the head. But the body fell into the sunset. The Winnebago will not fish forever in these waters . . . but their graves will remain forever on the bluffs. Red Wing, will you choose a grave with the Indian or with the white man?

RED WING

[*Deliberately.*] I will not go over the Big Sea Water.

BLACK WOLF

Red Wing has chosen.

THE CHEVALIER

[RED WING *is near the wigwam.*] You have forgotten your father.

RED WING

[*Advancing.*] You are a squaw-man. I am a Winnebago.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

Will the Chevalier eat before he goes?

RED WING

The Indian's squirrels are for the Indian's feast.

THE CHEVALIER

It grows late. Pierre will have something for me over in the Panther Woods. [*Pause.*] Glory of the Morning, I'm not to blame. I can no longer do my work in your world; you cannot follow me into mine. This has happened thousands of times before you were born: it will happen thousands and thousands of times after you and I are dead.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

The Chevalier is talking in the white man's tongue.

THE CHEVALIER

[*Shaking hands.*] Black Wolf, good-bye; and be kind to the poor foolish boy. [*To* GLORY OF THE MORNING.] Glory of the Morning, I am giving you this. [*He unbinds a silver cross from his vest under his coat.*] This silver cross will protect you from harm—I hope so—and will remind you of the Half Moon who tried so many times to explain our blessed religion to you. Some day the boy will have a squaw, and you will

show the token to your grandchildren. Pere La Rou gave it to me only two months ago at Montreal—and he asked about you.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Taking the cross mechanically.*] Pere La Rou . . . I remember him.

BLACK WOLF

[*Pointing with the calumet.*] Give back to the white man the white man's totem.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*With longing.*] Let me . . . let me keep it, Black Wolf.

BLACK WOLF

The white man's totem shall not remain in the village with Black Wolf's calumet.

[GLORY OF THE MORNING *returns in silence the keepsake to* THE CHEVALIER.

THE CHEVALIER

Good-bye, Glory of the Morning.

[GLORY OF THE MORNING *gives him her hand in silence.*

Good-bye, Red Wing.

[RED WING *turns proudly away.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Firmly.*] Give him your hand, my son.

RED WING

[*Obeying.*] Good-bye.

[THE CHEVALIER *and* OAK LEAF *are going toward the shore.*

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*Stepping after, and embracing and kissing the child.*] My little girl, my little girl!

THE CHEVALIER

Come!

[THE CHEVALIER *and* OAK LEAF *go down to the canoe upon the bank to the right. They launch it and are off.*

OAK LEAF

[*Shouting back from the distance.*] Good-bye, Black Wolf! Good-bye, Red Wing! [*After a brief pause, with eery voice.*] Good-bye, Glory of the Morning!

[*Motionless and silent*, GLORY OF THE MORNING, RED WING, *and* (*at a little distance*) BLACK WOLF *stand watching the canoe gliding away toward the Panther Woods. In a few moments* BLACK

WOLF *sits down in the rear on a boulder by the oak tree, and is busied again with the feathers on his calumet. Then* RED WING *squats on the ground beside him. After a moment or so,* GLORY OF THE MORNING *turns, picks up quietly the buck-skin shirt, goes over toward the wigwam, empties water from the jar into the kettle, and begins gathering sticks and leaves and arranging them under the kettle.* RED WING *jumps up and helps.*

BLACK WOLF

Red Wing, you are a man now. Building the fire for supper is squaw's work.

[RED WING, *half ashamed, goes back and squats again by* BLACK WOLF. GLORY OF THE MORNING *lights with the tinder the fire.*

RED WING

[*After a moment.*] Mother Glory of the Morning.

GLORY OF THE MORNING

[*On her knees, half turning her head.*] Yes, Red Wing.

RED WING

Won't Rainspot be sorry he couldn't say good-bye to Oak Leaf?